VOL. I

Nestar Russell

UNDERSTANDING WILLING PARTICIPANTS

Milgram's Obedience Experiments and the Holocaust

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Dedicated to Valerie Morse and other unruly troublemakers I've met…

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Risks are taken in this book that made some of the more careful people around me a little nervous. But because I think these risks are worth taking, I must emphasize that all responsibility for this book (and I mean it) rests with the author.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

When in 1945 the advancing Soviet Army put a stop to the Holocaust, about six million European Jews were already dead. Jews, of course, were not the only civilian victims of Nazi violence—the gay community, people with physical/intellectual disabilities, Roma and Sinti Gypsies, communists, Afro-Germans, Jehovah's Witnesses, Slovenes, Poles, and Russians also suffered persecution. Rummel puts the total number of civilians killed by the Nazis at 16,315,000.[1] Unlike these other groups, however, the Nazis aimed to kill *all* Jews and so, as Marrus argues, "In this respect, the fate of the Jews was unique."[2] It is for this reason that when delving into the perpetration of Nazi violence, this book focuses mostly—although certainly not exclusively—on the victimization of European Jews.

But whether victims were Jewish or otherwise, Clendinnen has asked that unsettling question pondered by many a student of the Holocaust:

In the case of Nazi 'desk murderers' it may be possible to estimate how far ideology and how far ambition (not to mention lack of imagination) worked to sustain their enthusiasm for murder […] With the 'hands-on' killers the problem is at once more visceral, and more opaque. We know they killed, and killed on a massive scale. The question is: how could they do it?[3]

With reference to the scholarly discipline that dominants Holocaust studies, Headland more specifically places his finger on why he thinks so little progress has been made on this question:

> Whatever necessary detachment historians may bring to their research, the gnawing horror of the firing squads and the gas chambers intrudes. There is a dimension of understanding here that eludes us.[4]

The historians, it seems, are as baffled as the rest of us. Perhaps the killings were organized and manned by a carefully selected concentration of the worst elements of German society: the sadists, psychopaths, and criminal opportunists? But this was not the case. Raul Hilberg has found that the vast majority of German perpetrators were remarkably *ordinary*.

> The bureaucrats who were drawn into the destruction process were not different in their moral makeup from the rest of the population. The German perpetrator was not a special kind of German. […] Even the killing units and the killing centers did not obtain professional killers.[5]

The Holocaust was such a massive logistical undertaking that the Nazi regime did not have the luxury of time or resources to recruit professional or hardened killers to do their dirty work. Instead, they recruited from the broadest of social circles. For example, according to Daniel Goldhagen, the ordinary men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 differed in no significant way from other German men of a similar age. Most were not even members of the Nazi party. Three-quarters of them had no affiliation with any of the major Nazi institutions, and some had even harbored hostility toward the Nazi party. The majority came from Hamburg, a city that did not generally support the Nazi regime. They were for the most part older family men who had lived under very different political systems and ideologies. These men "were not wide-eyed youngsters ready to believe whatever they were told." Also, there was no effort to ideologically reshape this unlikely group of would-be executioners for their future tasks.[6] As Christopher Browning, who researched the same battalion, concludes, "The men would not seem to have been a very promising group" for Hitler to rely upon to bring about his "racial utopia free of Jews."[7] Yet, they participated in many killing operations and executed thousands of Jews. There is even evidence they killed babies.[8] But these unlikely executioners did more than kill. Goldhagen shows that they often volunteered to pursue their Jewish victims with

cruel determination. For example, on 26 May 1943, they deported Jews from the Polish township of Międzyrzec to Treblinka. Goldhagen writes,

> Survivors are adamant that the Germans [in Reserve Police Battalion 101] were indeed incredibly brutal, that their cruelty that day was wanton, at times turning into sadistic sport. At the marketplace, the Jews… were "mocked" (*khoyzek gemacht*) and "kicked," and some of the Germans organized "a game" (*shpil*) of "tossing apples and whoever was struck by the apple was then killed." This sport was continued at the railway station, this time with empty liquor bottles. "Bottles were tossed over Jewish heads and whoever was struck by a bottle was dragged out of the crowd and beaten murderously amid roaring laughter. Then some of those who were thus mangled [*tseharget*] where shot." […] these ordinary Germans appeared…not as reluctant killers dragged to their task against their inner opposition to the genocide, but as "two-legged beasts" filled with "bloodthirstiness."[9]

The few survivors of this deportation were not the only ones who recalled acts of sadism. One member of the battalion later remembered that their leader, Major Trapp, had even rebuked his men for their cruelty. Trapp told his men that they "had the task to shoot the Jews, but not to beat and torture them…"[10] From evidence such as this, Goldhagen concludes that a unique strain of exterminationist, antisemitic hatred caused ordinary Germans to willingly and directly participate in the Holocaust.

Goldhagen's book was enthusiastically received by the reading public—even in Germany. Perhaps its appeal lies in trying to imagine how hatred could not have been a central feature of the Holocaust. Why, after all, would ordinary Germans like those in Reserve Police Battalion 101 repeatedly volunteer to do cruel and brutal things to people they did not hate? However, it is at this point in the Holocaust literature where the historiography becomes complicated, perhaps even bewildering. That is, although the antisemitism of Germany's many Ukrainian, Latvian, and Lithuanian helpers is undisputed,[11] the Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer argues that, excepting a few hundred hardcore true believers like Hitler, Göring, Himmler, Heydrich, Globocnik, Goebbels, and Streicher,

> a high proportion of [Nazi] Party members were not extreme antisemites; rather, they shared an antisemitism that one could define as pervasive, yet not necessarily murderous, perhaps even 'moderate'. But it was not only

the membership of the Nazi Party that may have been 'only moderately' antisemitic. This kind of moderate antisemitism was shared by a considerable part of the German population, although its pervasiveness is difficult to estimate.[12]

Many Holocaust historians agree with Bauer that Nazi Germany was only a moderately antisemitic society.[13] Browning, for example, argues that most Germans were increasingly "apathetic," "passive," and "indifferent" to the fate of their Jewish victims.[14] And the view that Germany was a moderately antisemitic society has recently been bolstered by more contemporary research. For example, Neitzel and Welzer analyzed secretly recorded conversations between ordinary German soldiers detained in Russian prisoner of war camps and found that although these soldiers expressed chilling attitudes on topics like death, destruction, killing, and rape, the intensity of their antisemitism (when mentioned) was clearly incongruent with that of hardcore ideological Nazism.

> Most of the soldiers are scarcely interested in ideology, politics, world orders, and anything of that nature. They wage war not out of conviction, but because they are soldiers, and fighting is their job. Many of them are anti-Semites, but that is not identical with being "Nazis." Nor does anti-Semitism have anything to do with willingness to kill. A substantial number of the soldiers hate "the Jews" but are shocked at the mass executions by firing squads.[15]

When compared to the Nazi regime's final solution to the "Jewish problem," there is clearly something more moderate in the views of most of these ordinary Germans.

What, then, drove the members of Reserve Police Battalion 101—a fairly representative sample of men drawn from a wider population of moderately antisemitic Germans? As Bauer asks, if in 1933 57% of the German electorate voted for non-Nazi parties (either anti-antisemitic or only moderately anti-Jewish), "how did it happen that by 1940–41 the overwhelming majority of Germans became a reservoir of willing murderers of Jews? *That* is the problem" (italics original).[16] To date, this question remains unanswered.

In this book, I argue that American social psychologist Stanley Milgram's Obedience to Authority research can, in fact, provide a fruitful avenue for addressing Bauer's question. In 1963, Milgram published a short article innocuously titled "Behavioral Study of Obedience."[17]

The article's key finding was that 65% of ordinary people in his laboratory willingly, if hesitantly, followed an experimenter's commands to inflict seemingly intense—perhaps even lethal—electrical shocks on an innocent, even "likable" person.[18] This baseline experiment, termed the Remote condition, was actually just the first of a score of variations now collectively termed "the Obedience studies."

Some experts on the Obedience studies, like Arthur G. Miller, believe Milgram's research to be "the most widely cited and provocative set of experiments in social science."[19] Benjamin and Simpson argue that Milgram's research is not only "the most famous, or infamous, study in the annals of scientific psychology" but also that it went on to "alter the course of psychology both conceptually and methodologically."[20] As Reicher, Haslam, and Miller note,

> [Milgram] is one of the few social psychologists who have had influence across a range of disciplines, from sociology to theology, and whose ideas have influenced society at large. His work has been the subject of multiple documentaries, of exhibitions, of art shows, even of a 1975 CBS television drama called "The tenth level" in which William Shatner […] played a Milgram-like figure called Professor Stephen Turner.[21]

In 2015, Magnolia Pictures released the film *Experimenter*, a biographical drama on Milgram and his experiments starring Peter Sarsgaard and Winona Ryder. Without exaggeration, in and beyond the confines of psychology, intrigue surrounding the Obedience studies has, for more than half a century, "continued unabated…"[22] Not all, however, are so enamored with Milgram's contribution. But even here, the disparity separating enthusiastic praise from nauseated criticism, surely the Obedience experiments are difficult to beat. Consider, for example, one of the founders of modern social psychology, Muzafer Sherif, on the one hand, who concluded: "Milgram's obedience experiment is the single greatest contribution to human knowledge ever made by the field of social psychology, perhaps psychology in general."[23] Then, on the other, the once equally famous psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim who argued Milgram's "…experiments are so vile, the intention with which they were engaged in is so vile, that nothing these experiments show has any value…"[24]

The on-going scholarly intrigue and popular fascination with the Obedience studies probably stems from Milgram's unveiling of the brutal side of ordinary people; a side of themselves that his participants

did not know or did not want to know exists. Consider, for example, the pseudonymous Elinor Rosenblum, a pillar of the community who did volunteer work with "dropouts" and "leather-jacket guys."[25] On completing the experiment, a stressed and somewhat embarrassed Rosenblum said to her (in fact) unharmed victim,

> You're an actor, boy. You're marvelous! Oh, my God, what he [the exper-imenter] did to me. I'm exhausted. I didn't want to go on with it. You don't know what I went through here. A person like me hurting you, my God. I didn't want to do it to you. Forgive me, please. I can't get over this. My face is beet red. I wouldn't hurt a fly. […] I kept saying, "For what reason am I hurting this poor man?" […] In my volunteer work, there aren't many women who will do what I do […] I'm unusual; I'm softhearted, I'm a softy. […] So I went on with it, *much* against my will.[26]

Rosenblum saw herself as a caring, selfless, and kindly person. Yet, when these attributes were unexpectedly put to the test, a very different set of actions emerged. The apparently altruistic Rosenblum went on to inflict what she believed were severe electrical shocks on an innocent man who was desperately begging her to stop. Then, when the man stopped screaming, having been seemingly rendered (at least) unconscious, she continued to inflict more shocks of an even greater magnitude—all because an apparent authority figure told her she had to do so.

When Milgram asked Rosenblum why she completed the experiment, she replied, "It is an experiment. […] So I had to do it. You said so."[27] With an uncannily similar response to that of many Germans after the war, Rosenblum, and many other participants in the Obedience studies, argued that they were just following orders.[28] Soon after the publica-tion of Milgram's experiments, scholars from a variety of academic dis-ciplines began drawing parallels—obviously similar in kind but differing enormously in terms of degree—between his findings and the Holocaust. Indeed, the connection was so frequently made that Miller began call-ing it the "Milgram-Holocaust linkage."[29] Milgram himself championed the link when he referenced the Holocaust in the first paragraph of his 1963 journal article, and drew numerous connections to it throughout his 1974 book, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*.

However, for reasons I will outline in this book, the current consensus in the more contemporary academic literature is that when it comes to the Holocaust, the Obedience studies have, at best, only minor explan-atory power.[30] In fact, there is no shortage of scholars who would go so

far as to argue that when it comes to the Holocaust, Milgram's experiments have little or no explanatory power at all.[31] To convince their readership, these scholars have highlighted how the Obedience studies differ to, or conflict with, the Holocaust's finer historical details. For example, unlike during the Holocaust, Milgram's participants were clearly concerned about the well-being of their "victim."

The most powerful criticism facing the Milgram-Holocaust linkage, however, may trace back to more foundational problems with the Obedience studies. Consider, for example, Gina Perry's exposé, *Behind the Shock Machine: The Untold Story of the Notorious Milgram Psychology Experiments.*[32] Based on documents contained in Milgram's personal archives and interviews with a variety of participants and research insiders, Perry documents Milgram's behind-the-scenes activities. Most unsettling is her revelation of differences between what Milgram said in his official publications and what he actually did. For example, although Milgram claimed that after each experimental trial all participants were informed that the learner never received any shocks,[33] Perry found that in fact most actually left the laboratory thinking the shocks were real.[34] She also raises more criticisms, both ethical and methodological, that by her book's end detracts from the credibility of Milgram's entire project. And Perry is far from alone: based on documents from the same archive, Ian Nicholson and Stephen Gibson raise other ethical and methodological criticisms, respectively.[35] With respect to the Milgram-Holocaust linkage, methodological criticisms are perhaps of greater concern because they call into question any generalization toward the Holocaust made from a potentially flawed foundation.

On the other hand, many other researchers have independently replicated the Obedience studies by closely following Milgram's methodological instructions, and produced similar results.[36] One particularly intriguing baseline replication was undertaken in West Germany in the late 1960s. This study produced an even higher 85% completion rate.[37] These independent replications convincingly indicate that despite the various methodological issues plaguing the original research, Milgram uncovered something real. In trying to explain his results, Milgram argued that most participants completed the baseline experiment because they honestly did not perceive themselves as responsible for their actions. They were merely instruments used by an authority figure. Although this explanatory account has, for a variety of reasons, been widely rejected,[38] some scholars have continued drawing behavioral comparisons between

Milgram's obedient participants and many Germans during the Holocaust.[39]

One such behavioral parallel that captured my attention is Miller's observation that, "Milgram's results could be likened to the Holocaust itself. Both scenarios revealed ordinary people willing to treat other people with unimaginable cruelty…"[40] If Miller is right, then it could also be argued that both Milgram and the Nazi regime *somehow* proved capable of rapidly transforming large numbers of "ordinary"[41] and arguably indifferent people into willing inflictors of harm. And if it is possible to delineate Milgram's start-to-finish journey in transforming most of his participants into inflictors of harm *on a likable person*, then perhaps these findings might offer some insight on how *only moderately antisemitic* Germans so quickly became willing executioners.

So, how did Milgram transform his ordinary and indifferent participants into willing torturers of other human beings? As I will show, Milgram began with a preexperimental (unofficial) goal to obtain, in the first official baseline experiment, a completion rate that would take his readership by surprise. With a preconceived goal in mind to "maximize obedience,"[42] Milgram then envisioned a basic procedure—a rough outline. Once he had envisioned a basic procedure, he undertook a variety of pilot studies. Using, among other things, a trial-and-error research methodology known as "exploration"—where one "has a feeling for the 'direction' in which to go (increase the pressure and see what happens) but no clear expectations of what to expect."[43] It was during these pilot studies that Milgram learned how to convert most of his ordinary participants into willing inflictors of harm. More specifically, during the pilot studies, Milgram discovered and honed a variety of manipulative techniques that he then incorporated into an emerging basic procedure, thereby causing, across the pilots, the overall completion rate to rise toward his preconceived goal. Thus, mapping the process of inventing and then running the pilot studies helps to reveal how Milgram gradually developed his basic procedure. Yet, the positivist structure of Milgram's first and subsequent publications (Introduction, Methodology, Results, and Discussion) provide few details about this critical developmental stage. As a result, the origins and step-by-step invention of his first official baseline experiment largely remained a mystery. In fact, on reading Milgram's journal articles, one could be forgiven for thinking that he must have invented the official procedure in his head and soon afterward unleashed it on the unsuspecting community of

New Haven, Connecticut.[44] With little mention of the pilot-study phase, his Obedience-study publications instead centered on the disturbing (impressive?) end results.

As historical sociologist Norbert Elias argues, a focus solely on the end result of a complicated social process is not a particularly fruitful means of unraveling its causes.[45] Elias cites sociologist Robert MacIver's analogy of a woolen textile. To truly understand its construction one should not just theorize based on the intricate end product. A more fruitful approach instead delineates the start-to-finish construction process—animal breeding and husbandry, the harvesting of raw woolen fibers, the cleaning, dying, and spinning of these fibers, and finally unraveling the start-to-finish weaving process. As MacIver warned, "By studying the fabric alone we could never understand the process of weaving, and we will never come to grips with the problem of social causation by studying its contemporary resultant patterns."[46]

Most readers of the Obedience studies find it surprising that 65% of Milgram's participants completed the baseline experiment (just as they are shocked that small bands of Germans could shoot and gas tens of thousands of other human beings in a single day). But because this outcome is a complex end result (MacIver's "fabric"), perhaps a more fruitful approach to promoting greater understanding requires a delineation of the process that led to the results—a detailed unraveling Milgram's start-to-finish transformative journey to his 65% completion rate. Determining Milgram's step-by-step process of discovery has two potentially significant outcomes. First, doing so may lead to a new and more robust theory that explains Milgram's findings. Second, delineating Milgram's step-by-step process might provide some important clues to how seemingly ordinary and only moderately antisemitic Germans were so quickly transformed into willing executioners. The achievement of these two outcomes constitutes the main aim of Volumes 1 and 2 of this book, respectively.

A key argument presented in this two-volume set is that the most convincing Milgram-Holocaust linkage is not necessarily to be found in the results of Milgram's many variations, but instead in Milgram's invention, construction, and logistical implementation of the experimental program itself. Namely, before he even ran the first official experiment, Milgram had to design and construct an organizational system not only capable of "processing" nearly a thousand participants within a limited timeframe, but also ensuring that all specialist helpers (research assistants, technicians, actors, and others) performed their duties in a coordinated

and orderly fashion until all data had been collected. Because the experiments involved inflicting intense stress on participants, there was a risk that some of these helpers might deem the program unethical and refuse to fulfill their necessary roles. Such a reaction would pose a threat to Milgram's goal achievement. As we shall see, however, Milgram was able to construct a procedure capable of persuasively (or, if needed, coercively) ensuring that every helper continued to perform their specialist job in a manner similar to the way the Nazi bureaucracy enabled the Holocaust. Thus, I argue, perhaps the most significant Milgram-Holocaust linkage consists of the ethically questionable things Milgram, in the role of "project manager," did behind-the-scenes to best ensure both his research team and participants did as they were told, thereby achieving his overarching preconceived organizational goal.

And much like a woolen textile, it is possible to deconstruct Milgram's start-to-finish journey. Beginning in 1985, Alexandra Milgram began donating her late husband Stanley's personal records—all 90.75 linear feet—to Yale University's Sterling Memorial Library. The *Stanley Milgram Papers* (hereafter SMP) includes extensive research notes on the pilot studies.[47] In 2006 and again in 2011, I visited Yale University and collected just over 1300 individual documents that detail key elements of Milgram's research journey.[48] These documents form the crucial primary sources for this book, in conjunction with a review of the secondary literature on both the Obedience studies and the Holocaust.

In terms of what follows, Chapter 2 explores the historiography on the Holocaust as it relates to the Obedience studies. The remainder of this volume then solely focuses on the Obedience studies. More specifically, Chapter 3 explores the origins and invention of Milgram's research program, Chapter 4 provides a detailed account of Milgram's largely undocumented pilot studies, and Chapter 5 presents an overview of the various experimental conditions along with Milgram's explanation surrounding what he found. Chapter 6 then details the wider academic community's reactions to both Milgram's research (in terms of ethics, methodological validity, and the applicability of the results to the Holocaust) and the theory he developed from his results. Based on this rather detailed account of Milgram's start-to-finish research journey, Chapters 7–9 then advance an alternative account of the baseline result. And in Volume 2, the observational and theoretical insights gained in Volume 1 are applied to the Nazi's attempted extermination of the European Jews. Volume 2 pursues this journey in an attempt to better

understand how ordinary and only moderately antisemitic Germans became willing executioners.

Although this two-volume set is obviously (actually necessarily) a long and detailed monograph, I suspect (hope?) it is likely to be an important multidisciplinary theoretical contribution to the scholarly literature. This suspicion is founded on my attempt to, as mentioned, address two important yet perplexing questions that, to date, remain unanswered. That is, first, because Milgram failed to adequately explain his own results, Volume 1 provides the reader with a fairly comprehensive three-chapter-long theoretical account explaining why, in my view, most of Milgram's baseline participants willingly inflicted seemingly intense shocks on an innocent person. Second, and in light of the complexities that Goldhagen's thesis encountered, Volume 2 attempts to answer the equally baffling problem raised by Bauer: how only moderately antisemitic Germans so quickly become Hitler's willing executioners.

NOTES

1. Rummel (1992, p. 13).
2. Marrus (1987, p. 24). See also Bauer (1990, p. 149), Katz (1994, p. 580, as cited in Bloxham and Kushner 2005, p. 67), and Rosenfeld (1999, p. 44).
3. Clendinnen (1999, p. 114).
4. Headland (1992, p. 205). See also Friedländer (2007, p. 240).
5. Hilberg (1961, p. 649, see also p. 640).
6. See Goldhagen (1996, pp. 206–211).
7. Browning (1992, p. 48).
8. Goldhagen (1996, p. 216).
9. Goldhagen (1996, pp. 256–257).
10. Quoted in Goldhagen (1996, p. 259). This was not an isolated example. The commandant of Sobibor extermination camp Franz Stangl claimed to be critical of his subordinate Heinz Bolender for bullying Jews (see Schelvis 2007, p. 113).
11. Relative to Germany, in "eastern Europe, anti-Jewish feelings were very much stronger" (Bauer 2001, p. 31).
12. Bauer (2001, p. 31).
13. Bankier (1992, pp. 72, 84), Heim (2000, p. 320), Johnson and Reuband (2005, p 284), Kershaw (1983, p. 277; 2008, p. 173), Koonz (2003, pp. 9, 11, 163–220), Kulka (2000, p. 277), Merkl (1975), and Mommsen (1986, pp. 98, 116).
14. Browning (1998, p. 200).

15. Neitzel and Welzer (2012, p. 6).
16. Bauer (2001, p. 103).
17. Milgram (1963).
18. Milgram (1974, p. 16).
19. Miller (1986, p. 1).
20. Benjamin and Simpson (2009, p. 12).
21. Reicher et al. (2014, p. 394).
22. Blass (2012, p. 197).
23. Quoted in Takooshian (2000, p. 10).
24. Quoted in Askenasy (1978, p. 131).
25. Milgram (1974, p. 81).
26. Milgram (1974, pp. 82–83).
27. Milgram (1974, p. 83).
28. Milgram (1974, p. 175).
29. Miller (2004, p. 194).
30. Russell and Gregory (2015).
31. See Berkowitz (1999), Fenigstein (1998a, b, 2015), Mandel (1998), and Mastroianni (2002, 2015).
32. Perry (2012).
33. Milgram (1964, p. 849).
34. Perry (2012, p. 92).
35. Nicholson (2011) and Gibson (2013a, b).
36. Blass (2012).
37. Mantell (1971, p. 101). Schurz's (1985) Austrian replication produced an 80% completion rate.
38. See Darley (1992, pp. 206–207), Mantell and Panzarella (1976, p. 244), Marcus (1974, p. 2), Miller (2004, p. 210), and Russell and Gregory (2005, pp. 340–341).
39. See Bauman (1989), Browning (1992), Charny (1982), Miller (1986), Russell and Gregory (2005), and Sabini and Silver (1982).
40. Miller (2004, p. 196).
41. Browning (1992, pp. 47–48) and Milgram (1974, p. 6).
42. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 158).
43. Harré and Second (1972, p. 69).
44. Russell and Picard (2013, p. 221).
45. Elias (1987, p. 226).
46. MacIver (1933, p. 145, as cited in van Krieken, 1998, p. 27).
47. Manuscript Group Number 1406 covers the period 1927–1986. The archive is arranged in five series: General Files (1954–1985); Studies (1927–1984); Writings (1954–1993); Teaching Files (1960–1984); Data Files (1960–1984). The five series contain information on Milgram's research into obedience to authority, television violence, urban psychology, and communication patterns within society.

48. For ten weeks I perused the materials relating to the Obedience to Authority experiments, including Box 1 (folders a–f); 1a (folders 1–15); Box 13 (folders 181–194); Box 17 (folders 243–257); Box 21 (folders 326–339); Box 43 (folders 124–129); Box 44; Box 45 (folders 130–162); Box 46 (folders 163–178); Box 47 (folders 179–187); Box 48 (folders 188–203); Box 55 (folders 1–22); Box 56 (folders 23–46); Box 59 (73–87); and Box 61 (folders 106–125); Box 152; Box 153 (audio tapes); Box 154; Box 155 (audio tapes); Box 156; and Box 157.

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CHAPTER 2

Germany's "Ordinary Monsters" and the Holocaust

> I find it incredible that human beings could ever turn into such beasts. The way the 'greens' [conventional criminals] knocked the French Jewesses about, tearing them to pieces, killing them with axes, and throttling them—it was simply gruesome.
> —Rudolf Höss, *Commandant of Auschwitz*[1]

The intention of this chapter is to provide the reader with a brief overview of the Holocaust, the Obedience studies, and the contentious relationship they share—the so-called Milgram-Holocaust linkage. It will explore some of the more important literature that is associated with or has grown out of this relationship.

The Holocaust: An Overview

After gaining political ascendancy in Germany in 1933, the Nazi party led by Adolf Hitler, as it had promised in its manifesto, turned its attention to the "Beseitigung" (removal, or possibly elimination) of the German Jews. Hitler blamed the Jews for all Germany's ills; for the Reich's poor economic state and, more importantly, for having lost World War One (and the great loss of German lives and land this defeat had entailed).[2] Hitler's strategy for Germany's resurrection was to rearm and go to war to recuperate (at least) the confiscated lands. Hitler believed that the ultimate success of this plan required that no Jews live within or near this expanding border.

Initially, the Nazis encouraged Jewish emigration through legislative changes and frequent acts of intimidation. These strategies were pursued to the point that daily life for Germany's Jews became increasingly unbearable. In 1938, for example, a Nazi party radical instigated a nationwide pogrom, which has since become known as Kristallnacht (Crystal Night or Night of the Broken Glass) due to the widespread smashing of Jewish-owned shop-front windows. Thousands of Jews were rounded up and sent to concentration camps where their release depended upon their agreement to leave Germany. This pogrom failed to generate much public support, and the disorderly behavior and wanton vandalism disgusted many German "onlookers."[3] Nevertheless, by the late 1930s, many Jews were trying to leave Germany, but most other nations refused to accept them or, at best, took small numbers of immigrants. International borders were closed to Germany's Jews because of antisemitic immigration policies or restraints on the immigration of those without capital (assets the Nazis had frozen).

During the lead-up to, and especially upon going to war, Germany's borders expanded. The new territories often had large Jewish populations that no other nation would accept, and so the Nazi regime's "Jewish problem" grew. After the failure of a plan to resettle Jews on the island of Madagascar, and later other equally or even more inhospitable locations, the Nazi regime instead decided on a policy of extermination. All the Jews within the then-expanding German sphere of influence were to be killed. In fact, many Jews had already died of starvation and disease in the Polish ghettos, for example, where they were forced to live until the Nazi regime secured a deportation destination. Holocaust historians generally agree that sometime during or soon after the second half of 1941, the Nazi regime decided to exterminate the European Jews, first by firearms, then by poisonous gas. Upon Germany's defeat in 1945, about two-thirds of all European Jews—about six million people—had been killed.

The Problem of "Ordinary Monsters"

Because of the scale of this "final solution," the vast majority of perpetrators involved in the mass killing of Jews were unlikely to have been zealous Nazi ideologues, but instead ordinary Germans from all walks of life. As the survivor Primo Levi noted,

More often and more insistently as…time recedes, we are asked by the young who our "torturers" were, of what cloth were they made. The term torturers alludes to our ex-guardians, the SS, and is in my opinion inappropriate: it brings to mind twisted individuals, ill-born, sadists, afflicted by an original flaw. Instead, they were made of the same cloth as we, they were average human beings, averagely intelligent, averagely wicked: save the exceptions, they were not monsters, they had our faces, but they had been reared badly. They were, for the greater part, diligent followers and functionaries, some fanatically convinced of the Nazi doctrine, many indifferent, or fearful of punishment, or desirous of a good career, or too obedient.[4]

After observing the 1961 trial in Jerusalem of a former mid-ranking SS bureaucrat, Adolf Eichmann, philosopher Hannah Arendt came to a similar but much more controversial conclusion. In conflict with the Israeli prosecution's depiction of Eichmann as a sadistic monster, Arendt saw only an ordinary man who was "neither perverted nor sadistic…[but] terribly and terrifyingly normal."[5] Eichmann, she argued, could be best understood as a passive recipient of orders, which he sought to carry out in the most efficient and competent way possible. Arendt coined the term the "banality of evil" to capture the murderous contributions to the Holocaust of numerous ordinary, mid-level managers and petty administrators who colluded in the killings.[6] Their complicity in the organized pursuit of malevolence flowed not from any personal monstrosity but from their thoughtless incapacity to empathize with others, their inability to balance technical with moral competence, and their desire to achieve advancement by impressing their organizational superiors. Arendt's ideas were built upon those of earlier intellectuals, including Raul Hilberg, C. Wright Mills, Hans Speier, and Max Weber, on the topic of bureaucratic malevolence.[7] Nonetheless, Arendt (a Jewish émigrée of German descent) faced intense and vitriolic criticism, largely at the hands of an outraged Jewish community, for suggesting that an efficient bureaucratic cog like Eichmann was no monster.

In the same year Arendt published her book, social psychologist Stanley Milgram independently reinforced her controversial concept of the "banality of evil" (or so it appeared) through his experimental program. Milgram (an American Jew of Hungarian and Romanian descent) demonstrated in a laboratory setting that more than half of his ordinary American participants were willing, when pushed by an authority figure, to inflict what they were led to believe were potentially lethal electric shocks on an innocent person.

As mentioned, Milgram's first publication in 1963 presented the procedure and results of Condition 1 Remote—the first official baseline experiment. The Remote condition involved three individuals: the experimenter (a preselected actor), the learner (a preselected actor), and the teacher (a naïve and real participant). The prearranged script had the learner enter a laboratory where he encountered the experimenter (posing as a scientist wearing a grey lab coat) and a waiting naïve participant. The experimenter then introduced the learner and naïve participant to each other. The experimenter told both of them that the experiment in which they had volunteered to take part was designed to investigate the effects of punishment—in the form of electrical shocks—on learning. They were then told that one person was required to be the teacher and the other the learner. The selection was prearranged to ensure that the actor was always the learner, and the naïve participant the teacher. The teacher watched as the experimenter strapped the learner—a 47-year old man whom most observers found "mild-mannered and likable"[8]—to a chair and attached an electrode to his arm. The learner would be unable to terminate the experiment by taking flight. He was informed that the teacher, using a microphone from another room, would ask him questions regarding a word-pair exercise. The learner was to attempt to answer these questions by pressing one of four switches on a device that would electronically transmit his answer to the teacher. The teacher was then taken into an adjacent room and placed before what was referred to as "the shock generator." The shock generator had 30 switches aligned in 15-volt increments from 15 to 450 volts. The switches were labeled in groups ranging from "SLIGHT SHOCK" to "VERY STRONG SHOCK" to "DANGER: SEVERE SHOCK." The final two switches (435 and 450 volts) were menacingly labeled "XXX." To increase the shock generator's credibility, the teacher was given a sample 45-volt shock. Then the experimenter instructed the teacher to give the learner a shock for each incorrect answer and to increase the level by one for each subsequent incorrect answer. In actuality, no shocks were administered, though Milgram went to great lengths to ensure the teachers would not know this.

Upon starting the experiment, the learner responded with a set of predetermined answers, 75% of which were purposefully incorrect. Due to the requirement to inflict intensifying shocks for each incorrect answer, acquiescent teachers found themselves advancing up the switchboard rapidly. According to Milgram, at any sign of hesitancy by the teacher, implied or overt, the firm yet detached experimenter delivered one or several of the following prods:

Prod 1: Please continue, or, Please go on.
Prod 2: The experiment requires that you continue.
Prod 3: It is absolutely essential that you continue.
Prod 4: You have no other choice, you *must* go on.

Whenever any teacher reached the 300-volt shock switch, the script called for the learner to emit an audible banging noise—several kicks on the wall—and then fall silent. The sudden absence of any further answers after the 300-volt shock implied that something had gone terribly wrong and that the shocks had, at least, rendered the learner unconscious. The experimenter then instructed the teacher to treat all subsequent unanswered questions as incorrect and accordingly inflict a shock at the next level.

If the teacher expressed any concerns, the experimenter would state, "Whether the learner likes it or not, you must go on until he has learned the word pairs correctly. So please go on" (followed by Prods 2, 3, and 4, if necessary). If, on the other hand, the teacher expressed any concerns about the learner's well-being, the experimenter would respond, "Although the shocks may be painful, there is no permanent tissue damage, so please go on." If the teacher tried to return the money he or she received for participating, the experimenter responded, "The money is not the issue…it's essential that you continue the experiment."[9] If at any time the teacher attempted to clarify the lines of responsibility, the experimenter would assert with confidence, "I'm responsible for anything that happens to him. Continue please." In the absence of any categorical acts of defiance by the teacher, Milgram deemed the experiment complete after the teacher administered three successive 450-volt shocks. The Remote condition ended in a 65% completion rate (twenty-six of forty teachers inflicted every shock).

Although the Remote condition was the first of the "Obedience studies" that Milgram published, Condition 5 New Baseline perhaps has attracted the most popular attention largely because it became the standard procedure for all subsequent variations. The New Baseline (or "cardiac") condition was similar to the Remote experiment except that the learner mentioned having a mild heart condition as he was strapped into the chair. Also, this time the learner conveyed "pain" by way of increasingly distressed verbal protests (transmitted to the teacher through standardized tape recordings). For example, at 120 volts the teacher heard the learner say from the adjacent room, "Ugh! Hey, this

really hurts." If the teacher continued to inflict shocks up until the 270-volt switch, he heard the learner scream in obvious agony, "Let me out of here. Let me out of here. Let me out of here. Let me out. Do you hear? Let me out of here." At the 300-volt switch, the learner responded with agonized screams and thereafter refused to answer any further questions. From the 345-volt switch and each shock thereafter, silence greeted all questions. As in the Remote condition, the experimenter reacted to the learner's silence by commanding that the teacher treat all unanswered questions as incorrect and accordingly inflict the next level of shock. And the experimenter continued to push the teacher until the latter administered three successive 450-volt shocks.

After completing the experiments, Milgram described the basic procedure minus the results to, among other groups, thirty-nine psychiatrists, who predicted that only about 0.001% of participants, or one teacher in a thousand—a "pathological fringe"[10]—would administer the highest shock on the board.[11] Yet, although the New Baseline condition more clearly revealed the sufferings of the learner to "teachers" than did the Remote condition, it too elicited a 65% completion rate (twenty-six of forty participants inflicted every shock). The psychiatrists had been "off by a factor of 500. And to be off by a factor of 500," said Milgram in his notes, "means that you just don't know a thing about it. I mean it[']s like saying that the average man is a mile tall."[12]

Participants who completed the experiment were later asked why they continued to inflict the shocks. Most pointed out that they personally wanted to stop, but the experimenter's persistent demands to continue and his repeated assurances that the responsibility for the learner's welfare was his, apparently left them with little choice but to go on.

The Milgram-Holocaust Linkage

Although Milgram acknowledged "enormous differences" between his experiments and the Holocaust, he could not help notice how his participants and many Nazi war criminals used the "just following orders" defense.[13] Other scholars also sensed similarities between Milgram's results and the Holocaust,[14] the previously mentioned "Milgram-Holocaust linkage." Milgram came to believe that both those who completed his experiments and Nazi perpetrators were influenced by a "common psychological process"—a perceived need to obey ostensibly legitimate orders from a higher authority.[15] Milgram theorized that the

participants in his experiment entered an *agentic state*, in which the individual perceives themselves as an instrument for carrying out the desires of a higher authority.[16] Importantly, Milgram did not regard the agentic state as an excuse for the actions undertaken but instead believed participants were being truthful when they later said that they believed themselves to have been mere instruments of a higher authority.[17] As participants frequently said after the experiment, they would never have inflicted any shocks of their own accord.

One variation on the New Baseline procedure that Milgram thought accelerated participants' entry into the agentic state was Condition 13: Peer Administers Shock. In this variation, the experimenter only required the participant to perform the subsidiary task of posing the word-pair questions while another participant (actually an actor) administered shocks for any incorrect answers. In comparison with the Remote and New Baseline experiments, this variation ended in a much higher completion rate—92.5% (thirty-seven out of forty participants) continued to perform their subsidiary role until the third 450-volt shock had been inflicted. Participants who completed this variation revealed in interviews after the experiment that they did not believe their involvement made them in any way responsible for the learner being shocked—rather they blamed their shock-administering peer. Yet, as the results of the earlier variations demonstrated, even when participants had to shock the learner themselves, those who completed the protocol were more inclined than those who refused to shift the blame to either the experimenter or the learner.[18]

Milgram believed the Peer Administers Shock condition captured in the laboratory setting the potentially destructive bureaucratic process, particularly its inherent characteristic of the division of labor (first link: experimenter instructs teachers; second link: teacher (participant) asks questions; third link: teacher (actor) inflicts "punishment"). Here, the "fragmentation of the total human act" ensured "no one man decides to carry out the evil act and is confronted with its consequences."[19] Relating this experimental variation to the Holocaust and the Nazi regime's use of disjointed bureaucratic processes, he argued, "The person who assumes full responsibility for the act has evaporated."[20] With the potentially destructive bureaucratic process in his sights, Milgram generalized beyond the confines of his laboratory setting: "Perhaps this is the most common characteristic of socially organized evil in modern society."[21]

Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* and its painstaking delineation of the intricacies of the Nazi regime's destructive bureaucracy influenced Milgram's conclusions.[22] Similarly, Milgram saw merit in Arendt's controversial concept of the "banality of evil," which he believed comes "closer to the truth than one might dare imagine."[23] Other scholars around this time, however, were uncovering detailed accounts of Holocaust perpetrators engaging in gratuitous acts of brutality. Prominent in this regard is Bernd Naumann who documented the 1963–1965 trial of a score of SS men who served in Auschwitz, the infamous labor and extermination camp.[24] Arendt, who wrote the preface in Naumann's book, responded to some of the evidence presented therein:

> No one had issued orders that infants should be thrown into the air as shooting targets, or hurled into the fire alive, or have their heads smashed against walls; there had been no orders that people should be trampled to death, or become the objects of the murderous 'sport,' including that of killing with one blow of the hand.[25]

Such gratuitous acts of cruelty, however, seem to stand in stark contrast to her own (and Milgram's) theories regarding supposedly indifferent perpetrators passively following orders. Milgram, for his part, regarded such examples of gratuitous violence as, at best complementary to his findings, and at worst irrelevant. It was, he argued, typical of modern bureaucracy, even when designed for destructive purposes, that, "most people involved…do not directly carry out any destructive actions. […] Any competent manager of a destructive bureaucratic system can arrange his personnel so that only the most callous and obtuse are directly involved in violence."[26] In Milgram's view, most of the Holocaust's perpetrators were ordinary and distant bureaucrats working within an organizational structure that carefully selected and inserted thugs at the end of the hierarchical chain to do all the dirty work. But this conclusion conflicts with Hilberg's assertion that a cross-section of the wider population worked throughout the destructive bureaucracy and, therefore, perpetrators were not a "special kind of German."[27] In his book *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, Browning reinforced the error of Milgram's assumption by showing that the executioners were "ordinary men." Indeed, prior to the battalion's first mass-shooting in early 1942, Major Trapp, the commanding officer in the field, "made an extraordinary offer: if any of the

older men among them did not feel up to the task that lay before him, he could step out."[28] "A mere dozen," out of 500 men, according to Browning, stepped forward to accept Trapp's offer.[29] Although those men who remained initially struggled psychologically with the task, most—80 to 90%—quickly acclimatized and "became increasingly efficient and calloused executioners."[30] These so-called ordinary men participated in the mass-shooting of at least 38,000 Jews.[31] After analyzing the evidence before him, Browning concluded that the most common motivational force behind the men's participation in the executions was probably peer pressure and conformity. Many did not want to be seen as shirkers by their comrades and leaders in the field and felt obligated to do their fair share of the dirty work. Although Browning struggles to see merit in the argument that what the men did during their first mass-shooting was "a case of deference to authority" (Trapp, for example, was actually a weak authority figure), he nevertheless believes, "many of Milgram's insights find graphic confirmation in the behavior and testimony of the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101."[32] For example, Browning notes that variations in Milgram's experiments that tested peer pressure in conjunction with orders from the highest yet most distant of authorities seemed to reinforce his own findings in relation to Reserve Police Battalion 101.[33]

It was, however, Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* that perhaps most powerfully undermined the Milgram-Holocaust linkage.[34] Based on the same archival material as Browning's study, Goldhagen's book draws a very different conclusion hinted at in the title. For Goldhagen, Browning's "Ordinary Men" were much more specifically "Ordinary Germans" (whereby "ordinary" in Germany was considered abnormal among ordinary people elsewhere).[35] Due to the intense furor generated in scholarly circles by this single contribution to the literature, it is necessary to present a detailed overview of what Goldhagen argues caused the Holocaust, the evidence he uses to support his theory, the ensuing academic response, and why—irrespective of criticism—Goldhagen's book poses such a threat to Milgram and many other scholars' research. From the outset, Goldhagen argues,

> Germans' antisemitic beliefs about Jews were the central causal agent of the Holocaust. They were the central causal agent not only of Hitler's decision to annihilate European Jewry…but also of the perpetrators'

willingness to kill and to brutalize Jews. The conclusion of this book is that antisemitism moved many thousands of 'ordinary' Germans—and would have moved millions more, had they been appropriately positioned—to slaughter Jews.[36]

This conclusion stands in striking contrast to Milgram's "most fundamental lesson" that "ordinary people…simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process."[37] On what grounds did Goldhagen base his conclusions?

Goldhagen presents two arguments. First, he argues that a virulent strain of eliminationist antisemitism spread throughout Germany, particularly from the nineteenth century.[38] By the early 1930s, this strain of antisemitism had not only become pervasive but also intensified to the exterminationist level. Second, Goldhagen argues that after the Nazi regime decided upon the final solution, Germany's unique strain of exterminationist antisemitism caused ordinary Germans to willingly and directly engage in the mass slaughter of Jews. He supports his second argument with a litany of brutal acts of violence that ordinary Germans in the police battalions, work camps, and on death marches frequently volunteered to inflict upon Jews. Typical of the evidence Goldhagen presents is a quotation from a former police official who testified that those serving with him "'were, with few exceptions, quite happy to take part in shootings of Jews. They had a ball!,' their killing was motivated by 'great hatred against the Jews; it was revenge…'"[39] Based on this and similar evidence, Goldhagen asserts that a uniquely German strain of murderous antisemitic hatred (in conjunction with a regime bent on annihilation) was, on its own, a "sufficient" cause of the Holocaust.[40]

Yet, many other scholars, Milgram among them, had presented other theories that they more cautiously promoted as necessary conditions. How, then, could Goldhagen suggest his theory alone was sufficient? Goldhagen explains that in Holocaust historiography there exists what he calls "conventional explanations," such as that the German perpetrators were coerced into killing; were unthinkingly obedient in following orders; were pressured to conform due to social psychological influences (such as peer pressure); were motivated by prospects of personal advancement; and finally, due to the fragmentation of the killing process, did not comprehend the full implications from their individual actions. In rebutting these explanations, Goldhagen exposes a flaw that

he believes each of the conventional explanations has been taken for granted. Each "assumes that the Germans were in principle opposed (or would have been had they not, supposedly, been rendered 'indifferent,' numbed by their institutional circumstances) to the mass slaughter of Jews, to a genocidal program."[41] The institutional circumstances that other scholars believe both diminished opposition and promoted indifference were side effects generated by the modern, disjointed, bureaucratic, and technological machinery of destruction. Goldhagen's second argument demonstrates, however, that most of the perpetrators in the bureaucratically unsophisticated institutions—those that did not involve disjointed killing processes like the police battalions, work camps, and death marches—did not feel indifferently toward their Jewish victims, nor did they oppose their slaughter. Instead, Goldhagen illustrates in great detail that in these bureaucratically unsophisticated killing institutions, ordinary Germans were still "Hitler's willing executioners." Goldhagen argues that the evidence he presents in support of his second argument places the plausibility of all the conventional explanations, and their apparently necessary conditions, into sudden doubt.

Although Goldhagen aimed his critique of "conventional explanations" at the contributions of scholars such as Milgram, Arendt, Browning, and indirectly, Zygmunt Bauman, he really had his sights set on the leading figure of "Raul Hilberg, who can be seen as an exemplar of this sort of thinking…"[42] Having refuted Hilberg, his many supporters, and all of their necessary conditions, Goldhagen believed he had cleared the path of all obstacles inhibiting his theory as the most plausible. With confidence, he asserts that a uniquely German brand of murderous antisemitic hatred (in conjunction with a regime bent on annihilation) was, on its own, a sufficient cause of the Holocaust.

Does Goldhagen's evidence support his theory? In regard to the first argument Goldhagen largely failed to persuade the vast majority of specialist academics of the presence of a unique historical strain of exterminationist German antisemitism.[43] For example, Goldhagen's thesis cannot explain why German society in the nineteenth century emancipated a Jewish population that his book argues they hated and later targeted for extermination.[44] Also, Goldhagen's historical account of German antisemitism could not explain with sufficient force why other nations with demonstrably more violent historical relations with their Jewish communities, like the Soviet Union, did not also try to exterminate their populations,[45] nor why this supposed German hatred

disappeared after World War Two.[46] As a result, Goldhagen's peers have generally concluded that his account of German antisemitism both before and during Nazi rule is simply "unhistorical."[47]

Goldhagen's second argument, however, that ordinary Germans frequently and willingly volunteered to engage in, and inflict upon Jews, cruel acts of violence, emerges relatively unscathed from academic criticism. In fact, although Browning criticized Goldhagen's first argument and overall theory, he supported the second argument pointing out, "On several issues Goldhagen and I do not disagree: first, the participation of numerous 'ordinary' Germans in the mass murder of Jews, and second, the high degree of voluntarism they exhibited."[48] Browning adds, however, that due to research like Hilberg's and his own, "neither of these conclusions is a new discovery in the field of Holocaust studies."[49] Omer Bartov suggests if Goldhagen is right, then oxymoronically Hitler's willing executioners must have been "Ordinary Monsters."[50]

Thus, despite its debatable originality, Goldhagen's second argument seems to support the validity of his criticism of the "conventional explanations." Yet, most academics still reject Goldhagen's overall theory. They question how a uniquely German brand of antisemitic hatred could have caused the Holocaust when there is no historical evidence capable of substantiating the claim that German society was virulently antisemitic. Many scholars of the Holocaust, for example, are of the opinion that most Germans, even within and particularly beyond the Nazi Party, might more accurately be described as mildly antisemitic, even to the point of feeling "absolute indifference" to the victimization of the Jews.[51] Goldhagen himself states in response to the flood of criticism undermining the plausibility of his first argument,

> Even if some would conclude that I am not entirely correct about the scope and character of German anti-Semitism, it does not follow that this would invalidate my conclusions […] The central part of the study, about the perpetration of the Holocaust, logically, can stand on its own and must be confronted directly.[52]

Most scholars of the Holocaust, however, believe Goldhagen's inaccurate portrayal of German antisemitism invalidates his overall conclusion. According to Hilberg, even before the end of 1996, academics had stopped taking Goldhagen's book seriously.[53] But if scholars had apparently discarded *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, Hilberg also said, somewhat

contradictorily, "the cloud that Goldhagen created will hover over the academic landscape. It will not soon disperse."[54] Hans-Ulrich Wehler agreed, dismissing *Hitler's Willing Executioners* as a "thorn in the flesh": a semi-permanent nuisance whose confounding influence on the discourse would dissipate with time—preferably sooner than later.[55] Goldhagen's thesis would not "soon disperse" because it had in fact exposed a weakness in the conventional explanations: the issue of German cruelty. But, although Goldhagen had discovered a hole in the historical analysis, that hole could not be filled with his own argument of "hatred." Alluding to the weakness of the conventional explanations, Goldhagen's response to his critics was emphatic: "Not a single critic [of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*] even attempts to account for the perpetrators' cruelty with its specific features; not a single critic provides any explanation of his own for the voluntarism and the zeal of the perpetrators..."[56] Unable to provide an adequate counter explanation, some of the leading scholars in the field conceded some ground to the young scholar. For example, Browning states, "Goldhagen is quite correct that cruelty in the Holocaust [...] is an issue that scholars have not dealt with at length..."[57] Bauer's view matches Browning's: although "Goldhagen's discussion about [antisemitic] norms that did not exist is useless," he is "right to emphasize" the issue of cruelty "because not enough has been said about it..."[58] But despite these concessions, both Browning and Bauer continue to side with Hilberg that "ordinary people were guided by the bureaucratic machine."[59]

Even so, Hilberg's "wiped off the map" statement gives the unfair impression that *Hitler's Willing Executioners* has been fast-tracked to academic oblivion. This opinion may not be too surprising considering the obvious problems Goldhagen's issue of cruelty poses for Hilberg's thesis. Namely, Hilberg, Arendt, Bauman, Rubenstein, and, central to this book, Milgram have all, to varying degrees, argued that a destructive bureaucratic process accentuated the death toll during the Holocaust because its inherently disjointed nature—its division of labor—provided the vast majority of the perpetrators with a necessary psychological buffer against the killings.[60] As Hilberg says,

> It must be kept in mind that most of the participants did not fire rifles at Jewish children or pour gas into gas chambers. A good many, of course, also had to perform these very 'hard' tasks, but most of the administrators and most of the clerks did not see the final, drastic link in these measures of destruction.[61]

Hilberg and his many adherents are of the opinion that the segmented, routinized, depersonalized, and thus bureaucratized killing process enabled most of the perpetrators to avoid feelings of sympathy and personal responsibility for their victims' deaths. Goldhagen, however, rather convincingly questions the necessity of such segmentation, because, if those at the "final drastic link" in the bureaucratic process were "ordinary" Germans capable of the grisliest of deeds, what would have stopped the "normal" (as Arendt said) desk murderers further up the chain from engaging in the same behaviors in the absence of the bureaucratic process? In fact, Hilberg's own words lend some weight to Goldhagen's point:

> Any member of the Order Police could be a guard at a ghetto or on a train. Every lawyer in the Reich Security Main Office was presumed to be suitable for leadership in the mobile killing units; every finance expert to the Economic-Administrative Main Office was considered a natural choice for service in a death camp. In other words, all necessary operations were accomplished with whatever personnel were at hand.[62]

Goldhagen's point is that those perpetrators who killed directly were, like the more distant and blinkered bureaucrats, ordinary, average, and therefore, generally representative of wider German society. Thus, bureaucracy's inherent psychological buffer was unlikely to have been a necessary condition contributing to the cause and eventual extent of the Holocaust.

Indeed, other scholars have indirectly supported Goldhagen's point. Bloxham and Kushner refer to Pohl's "de-bureaucratization" of the Holocaust,[63] arguing that "the murder by shooting *in situ* of millions of Polish, Soviet and Serbian Jews" cannot "be described in any meaningful sense as a modern 'bureaucratic' process."[64] And although John Darley sees merit in the role of bureaucracy during the Holocaust—as do Bloxham and Kushner—he notes "to my mind [it] doesn't go far enough. […] many people participated in the direct acts of killing […] More needs to be said about the mental alterations that took place in those individuals; Weber's [and thus Hilberg's] 'routinization of bureaucratic subroutines' is not enough."[65]

Darley makes a good point, especially when one considers Hilberg's words on the mental alterations of the most directly involved Nazi perpetrators:

> The most important problems of the destruction process were not administrative but psychological. The very conception of the drastic "final solution" was dependent on the ability of the perpetrators to cope with weighty psychological obstacles and impediments. […] the basic psychological problem of the German bureaucracy [was that]…the German administration had to make determined efforts to prevent the breakdown of its men into either "savages" or "neurotics."[66]

So *how* exactly did the Nazi regime and its ordinary German functionaries overcome the weighty psychological obstacles that, once scaled, allowed these men to kill in such massive numbers? Like Goldhagen's, Hilberg's answer is less than satisfying. "For many, undoubtedly, the task became just another job, to be done correctly and mechanically; i.e., the men made some sort of "adjustment" to the situation."[67] This vague answer, however, only leads one back to the dead-end of Clendinnen's "how could they do it?"

If Goldhagen's book highlights a weakness in Hilberg's thesis, it all but discredits the Milgram-Holocaust linkage. Although Goldhagen argued, much like Browning and Naumann before him, that end-line perpetrators frequently and willingly volunteered to undertake mass shootings, he also went one step further. He provides evidence of lower-ranking Nazis disobeying orders from the highest authorities to stop killing.[68] In such cases, whatever causal forces lay behind the actions of these perpetrators, obedience to authority was clearly not one of them.

Hitler's Willing Executioners has generated an academic impasse with a minority who support and a majority who reject its ambitious assertions. Most historians agree, for example, that Goldhagen's first argument is untenable, but few dispute his second argument that many ordinary Germans voluntarily engaged in cruelty. Despite the failure of the first argument to stand up, the second argument maintains the validity of the criticism he directed at the conventional explanations.

Treating the less disputed aspects of Goldhagen's thesis with the kind of respect it deserves, Bauer cuts to the crux of the matter broached but not solved in *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. How did a mostly moderate antisemitic society like Germany in the early 1930s willingly murder millions of Jews in the early 1940s?[69] Likewise, Browning, in reference to the Kristallnacht pogrom of 1938, asks, "How in three brief years had 'ordinary' Germans been transformed from 'onlookers' squeamish and disapproving of vandalism, arson, and assault into 'willing executioners' who could perpetrate mass murder with unfettered violence?"[70]

A similar question applies to Milgram. How did he do it? How did he transform large numbers of ordinary and somewhat indifferent people into willing agents of harm? Answering this question is, as mentioned, important for two reasons. First, doing so might prove fruitful for the development of a new and more robust theory capable of explaining Milgram's results. Second, Milgram's journey of discovery and a new theoretical lens on the Obedience studies may help to answer how ordinary and only moderately antisemitic Germans during the Holocaust so quickly became Hitler's willing executioners. In the next two chapters, I explore how Stanley Milgram invented the Obedience studies and proved capable of transforming otherwise ordinary participants into willing torturers of other human beings.

Notes

1. Höss (2001, p. 135).
2. To avoid occupation, Germany signed an armistice.
3. See Bankier (1992, p. 72), Browning (2004, pp. 9–10, 428), and Kershaw (1983, pp. 262–263).
4. Levi (1988, p. 202).
5. Arendt (1963, p. 253). See also Charny (1982, p. 17).
6. Arendt (1963, p. 231).
7. Allen (2005, pp. 259–260).
8. Milgram (1974, p. 16).
9. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2430.
10. Milgram (1974, p. 31).
11. The experimental procedure Milgram described to them was actually Condition 2, Voice-Feedback, which was the same as the Remote condition except the learner's verbal and moderately distressed reactions could be heard throughout.
12. SMP, Box 46, Folder 163.
13. Milgram (1974, p. 175).
14. See Bauman (1989), Blass (1993, 1998), Browning (1992, 1998), Hilberg (1980a), Langerbein (2004), Kelman and Hamilton (1989), Miller (1986), Russell and Gregory (2005), and Sabini and Silver (1982).
15. Milgram (1974, p. 175).
16. Milgram (1974, p. 134).
17. Milgram (1974, p. 146).
18. Milgram (1974, p. 203).
19. Milgram (1974, p. 11).
20. Milgram (1974, p. 11).

21. Milgram (1974, p. 11).
22. Hilberg (1961b).
23. Milgram (1974, p. 6).
24. Naumann (1966).
25. Quoted in Naumann (1966, p. xxiv).
26. Milgram (1974, pp. 121–122).
27. Hilberg (1961a, p. 649).
28. Browning (1998, p. 2).
29. Browning (1998, p. 71).
30. Browning (1998, p. 77).
31. Browning (1998, p. 225).
32. Browning (1992, p. 174).
33. Browning (1992, p. 175).
34. Goldhagen (1996a).
35. Germans living in Nazi Germany may have been normal and ordinary, but they also lived through or directly experienced the highly destructive First World War, a crippling economic depression, postwar political turmoil during the Weimar period, and many years living under an increasingly violent militaristic regime (De Swaan 2015, pp. 34–35; see also Stone 2010, p. 97).
36. Goldhagen (1996a, p. 9).
37. Milgram (1974, p. 6).
38. Goldhagen's evidence included nineteenth-century antisemitic political commentaries, petitions, pamphlets, and electoral voting patterns (1996a, pp. 54–76).
39. Quoted in Goldhagen (1996a, p. 396).
40. Goldhagen (1996a, p. 417).
41. Goldhagen (1996a, p. 385).
42. Goldhagen (1996a, p. 385).
43. See Aschheim (1996), Bartov (1996), Bauer (2001), Browning (1998), Finkelstein (1997), Finkelstein and Birn (1998), Stern (1996), and Traverso (1999).
44. Bartov (1996, p. 34) and Finkelstein (1997, p. 51).
45. Finkelstein (1997, p. 41) and Hilberg (1997, p. 724).
46. Bartov (1996, p. 34) and Finkelstein (1997, p. 44).
47. Stern (1996, p. 129).
48. Browning (1998, p. 192).
49. Browning (1998, p. 192).
50. Bartov (1996, p. 32).
51. Bankier (1992, p. 84).
52. Goldhagen (1996b, p. 40).
53. Hilberg (1997, p. 725).

54. Hilberg (1997, p. 728).
55. Wehler (1998, p. 93).
56. Goldhagen (1996b, p. 39).
57. Browning (1998, p. 208).
58. Bauer (2001, pp. 102–103).
59. Bauer (2001, p. 102).
60. Arendt (1963), Bauman (1989), Hilberg (1961b), Milgram (1974), and Rubenstein (1978).
61. Hilberg (1961b, p. 1024).
62. Hilberg (1980b, p. 19).
63. Pohl (1997, p. 405).
64. Bloxham and Kushner (2005, p. 155).
65. Darley (1992, p. 210).
66. Hilberg (1961a, p. 646).
67. Hilberg (1961a, p. 218).
68. Goldhagen (1996a, pp. 356–357).
69. Bauer (2001, p. 103).
70. Browning (2004, p. 429).

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The Origins and Evolution of Milgram's Obedience to Authority Experiments

It is not unusual for scholars largely critical of the Obedience studies to nevertheless admit to being impressed by aspects of Milgram's work. Marcus, for example, after writing a largely negative review of Milgram's book concluded that the experiments were "devilishly ingenious, cleverly thought out, and—whatever one thinks of them—extremely provocative and probably important."[1] How, exactly, did Milgram come up with a research idea that, as Blass argues, "is clearly one of the best-known psychological experiments of our time"?[2] This chapter reveals the key influential events, experiences, and people that contributed to Milgram's development of the Obedience studies. These influences were many and varied, and the earliest of them to date Milgram's early childhood. They are worth reviewing because Milgram's journey of discovery is likely to have influenced the theoretical development of his project and help us to better understanding how during the Holocaust ordinary and only moderately antisemitic Germans so quickly became willing executioners.

BEGINNINGS AND EARLY INFLUENCES

Several months after the Nazi regime came to power, Stanley Milgram was born into a working-class Jewish family in the Bronx on 15 August 1933. Milgram's Hungarian father and Romanian mother maintained a small, yet successful bakery and cake-decorating business. From an early age, he showed a keen interest in a wide variety of scientific pursuits

ranging from mixing sometimes explosive chemical concoctions to, at age 15, designing a dual-jet-propelled crankshaft.[3] Young Milgram was bright, imaginative, and curious. As he said himself, "I was always doing experiments; it was as natural as breathing, and I tried to understand how everything worked."[4] However, life was not without its somber overtones. Throughout Milgram's childhood, his parents worried constantly about the fate of relatives in Europe caught under the cloud of the expanding Nazi empire.[5] Stanley's awareness of, and sensitivity to, the geographically distant persecution of European Jews extended into his formative years, as his 1946 Bar Mitzvah speech makes clear.

> As I come of age and find happiness in joining the rank[s] of Israel, the knowledge of the tragic suffering of my fellow Jews throughout war-torn Europe makes this also a solemn event and an occasion to reflect upon the heritage of my people—which now becomes mine.[6]

It was probably no coincidence that in the same year Stanley delivered this speech, relatives who had survived the Holocaust were staying in the Milgram household,[7] and the first and most widely publicized of the many Nazi war crimes trials were unfolding in Nuremberg.[8]

Milgram attended James Monroe High School in the Bronx where he developed and nurtured the creative talents he would draw on later in life (for example as a stage designer for school theatrical productions, and as editor of the school newspaper). The teenage Milgram wrote his first article for the school paper in 1949 on leukemia among survivors of the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[9] Coincidence or not, Philip Zimbardo, who undertook social psychology's other most (in) famous experiment—the 1971 Stanford Prison Experiments—was an acquaintance of Milgram's at James Monroe High.

After high school, Milgram enrolled at New York City's Queens College where he lost interest in the pure sciences of chemistry and biology and instead majored in political science, with a minor in the arts.[10] As an undergraduate, he developed a fascination with foreign lands, peoples, and their cultures. He became president of the university's international relations club, and in the summer of 1953 embarked on a lone backpacking tour of France, Italy, and Spain. During this trip, Milgram enrolled in a one-month language course at the Sorbonne in Paris where he honed his ability to speak French fluently.[11]

Back in New York, Columbia University's School of International Affairs accepted Milgram into its graduate program even before he completed his BA with honors in 1954. However, Milgram had become frustrated with Political Science's predominantly philosophical approach,[12] and instead, the young scholar had developed an interest in social psychology. He considered the possibility of joining this relatively new and exciting discipline, and decided to apply for a place in the graduate program of Harvard University's Department of Social Relations.[13] In his application, Milgram stated that it was "periods of war I find particularly interesting."[14] His scholarship application to the Ford Foundation reinforces this interest in war. He says that for his final honors project, he wrote an essay titled "The French Press Under the German Occupation."[15] The crimes of the Nazi regime had engaged Milgram's intellectual curiosity.

Harvard, however, rejected Milgram's application because he had no background in psychology. During the summer of 1954, a determined Milgram swiftly remedied this deficiency by enrolling in and completing six courses (five in psychology) at three local New York City colleges. Soon afterward, Harvard offered him a place and, financed by a scholarship from the Ford Foundation, Milgram moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts.[16]

At Harvard's Department of Social Relations, Milgram was exposed to the ideas of a number of highly respected intellectuals, including Talcott Parsons and Henry Murray, and especially Jerome Bruner, Roger Brown, and his eventual mentor, Gordon Allport. Milgram encountered just the kind of learning environment where an eager and creative young mind could thrive. In his first two years, the topic of national characteristics and stereotypes captured Milgram's imagination. His first-year lecture notes include Allport's discussion of a cross-cultural study that performed a discourse analysis on a sample of German and American plays.

Allport—20 '55 Cross-cultural method—National Character ….

| CONTENT ANALYSIS OF GERMAN PLAYS. | [*Indecipherable name*] performed content analysis of 45 German and 45 American plays produced in 1927, analyzing content, themes. |

| Ideological
destiny
character
Fullfilment [*sic*] | German plays much more about men than women, much more ideological, social. American plays centered on private problems – German hero has rendezvous with destiny – must disregard personal problems. In American drama, the hero is successful because his character changes. In German plays, the ending may be tragic but his character is fulfilled.[17] |

In the left-hand margin, Milgram marked these lecture notes with a large asterisk underlined with three bold lines, presumably to signal an area of particular interest—perhaps an early indication of his incipient intellectual curiosity about Germany. The following year, Milgram enrolled in a course headed by Roger Brown for which he read a hundred or so articles and books on the topic of national characteristics and stereotypes.[18]

The most influential intellectual figure Milgram encountered, however, was a visiting scholar by the name of Solomon Asch, who was invited to Harvard as a guest lecturer in the 1955/1956 academic year. Asch was best known in social psychology for his Group Pressure-Conformity experiment.[19] In this experiment, an instructor informed eight men seated around a table that they were to assess three lines unequal in length and match them to a fourth separately presented line where the correct answer was patently obvious. Starting with the first participant and moving around the table, each person offered to the group his assessment of which line matched the fourth. However, all participants except the seventh were actors. In the initial trials, the "subjects" selected the obviously correct answer. In the third trial (and randomly thereafter), however, the actors all gave the same, but clearly incorrect answer. The experiment was designed to assess whether or not the actors' incorrect answers might have a conforming influence on the only genuine participant. When confronted with an internal conflict between trusting their independent assessment or yielding to that of the seven actors, 32% of the fifty participants conformed to the group's answer, meaning they provided answers they probably knew

to be wrong.[20] To test whether the participants who offered incorrect answers were, indeed, influenced by the group, Asch presented the line assessment test to thirty-seven randomly selected participants in the absence of the group. This simple control experiment revealed the participants provided the correct answer 99% of the time. In his notes from circa 1956–1959, Milgram reveals why he believed "Asch's expt [*sic*] is a Great Experiment."

> He belives [*sic*] that the conflict with him is a purely private issue which concerns no one but him, and of which all others are totally unaware. He dares not betray his secret, yet by his actions, he is betrayed. The yielding subject makes frantic efforts to conceal his conflict, yet by these efforts is the conflict betrayed.[21]

Allport assigned Milgram to be Asch's teaching and research assistant, an opportunity that further cemented the visiting scholar's methodological and intellectual influence on his eager new apprentice.[22]

MILGRAM'S PH.D. THESIS

Soon after his time with Asch, Milgram conceived of an ambitious experiment for the final component of his Ph.D. degree. He would undertake a procedural adaptation of Asch's Group Pressure-Conformity experiment that, instead of using pictures of lines, presented participants with an auditory tone they were to match with one of a succession of several other tones. A participant entering a laboratory would encounter a coat rack piled with jackets and a row of seemingly occupied closed booths. After entering the sixth booth and donning earphones, the participant would hear several acoustic tones and the responses of the other participants. In fact, however, the other booths were empty and these responses were prerecorded by actors. Like Asch's experiment, the other "subjects" sequentially gave the obviously correct answer but eventually started providing incorrect ones.

In a number of ways, Milgram's adaptation of Asch's experiment was methodologically more rigorous than the original. Unlike Asch's prototype where the actors might say something slightly different in every trial, in Milgram's experiment, his actors' prerecorded responses

were uniform and, therefore, scientifically standardized. Also, Milgram informed the participants that their responses would contribute to the improvement of air traffic safety signals, thus investing their responses with potential "life and death" consequences.[23] This innovation overcame a significant criticism of Asch's original experiment; participants would have experienced little compunction in going along with the group due to the trivial nature of the line-judgment task.

But, Milgram's most innovative idea was his intention to test his experiment on participants from different countries. Influenced by Allport and Brown, his ultimate goal was to undertake a cross-cultural comparison that would transform "the topic of national characteristics from armchair speculation to an object of scientific inquiry."[24] Milgram revealed the countries he intended to include in a preliminary hypothesis dated 24 September 1956. "Now interms [*sic*] of the things I have read and seen, I would predict as follows: Conformity, as measured by the mean differences of pressured responses will be G[ermans] > E[nglish] > F[rench]."[25] Milgram's reference here to what he had "read and seen" is intriguing. It is likely he is referring to France's reputation for political dissent,[26] and the common post-World War Two stereotype of Germans as highly conformist, as evidenced by their broad participation in the Holocaust.[27] Milgram had formulated a Ph.D. hypothesis on then-prevalent stereotypes of national characteristics.

On 17 October 1956, Milgram presented Allport with the project he hoped to pursue.

> In brief, I would like to write my thesis in 1957-58, on the subject of national character, and with you as my thesis director […] For a long time I have had an interest in psychology as it applies to national groups. You may remember my somewhat tedious analysis of 'national stereotypes' written for your Social Psychology qualifying course in the spring of 1955 […] I would like to run a variation of Dr. Asch's group pressure experiment across several European countries, in particular, England, France, and Germany.[28]

Allport agreed to supervise Milgram and saw potential in his initial idea, but armed with far greater research experience, anticipated his underling would encounter major and frustrating obstacles in securing facilities and participants. Milgram's idea required substantive revision. With research ideas like this one, it is perhaps unsurprising that even among

competitive Harvard graduates, Milgram had developed a reputation for being ambitious. In a letter to Jerome Bruner dated 21 December 1956, Milgram reveals that "students who have just completed their theses… have been trying to persuade me…I should not overstretch myself at this time." They apparently advised him to, "Just write a good thesis Mr., and then do your grand scale research."[29] But the enthusiastic Milgram had already contacted government officials in England, France, and Germany to inform them of his intention to run experiments in their countries.[30]

In the meantime, however, Allport convinced Milgram to scale down the initial idea to a two-nation comparison involving participants from none of the original countries. Instead, Allport persuaded Milgram to test people from the United States and Norway. In terms of feasibility and logistics, including an American sample made obvious sense, but the selection of Norway is somewhat perplexing. It is probably explainable by the fact that many Norwegians spoke English and Allport was aware that a number of academics from Oslo's Institute of Social Research were interested in and sympathetic to experimental cross-cultural research. There were unlikely to be any problems in Norway in terms of facilities and participant recruitment.[31]

During the summer of 1956, Milgram undertook pilot studies on a sample of Americans (Harvard students) that, as he correctly anticipated, produced high rates of conformity. In his research proposal, Milgram predicted that Americans would conform more than Norwegians. But research conducted in Norway in 1957 showed that the Scandinavian sample differed little from the American one. Milgram's prediction had been wrong, and he needed to find a more promising comparator nation than the United States. According to Blass, because Milgram spoke French fluently,

> France came immediately to mind. His experience living in Paris during the summer of 1953 suggested that France was a country marked by far less social consensus than Norway, a country with a tradition that seemed to prize critical judgment and diversity of opinion. "France seems to me to be a very good bet," he wrote Allport.[32]

France may have been Milgram's first choice, but he also thought "Germany would be highly interesting, but I cannot handle the language."[33] This statement is noteworthy because Milgram had long suspected Germans to be highly conformist. If correct, however, there was

a risk that a German sample might be as dull as the American one for comparing with the conformist Norwegians. Yet despite this risk, something drew him to contemplate undertaking his experimental procedure on what he suspected would be a sample of conforming Germans.

In August 1958, Milgram traveled to France. After arriving in Paris, he encountered just the kind of trouble Allport had predicted in his initial criticism of Milgram's research proposal. With respect to facilities and help in the solicitation of participants, Milgram encountered what indeed must have felt to him like typical stubborn French independence and endless frustration.[34] During his stay, he wrote a letter to a friend back at Harvard that illustrates how the Holocaust was never far from his thoughts,

> I should have been born into the German-speaking Jewish community of Prague in 1922 and died in a gas chamber some 20 years later. How I came to be born in the Bronx Hospital, I'll never quite understand.[35]

Milgram's research challenges soon cleared, however, when Harvard heavyweight Jerome Bruner suggested, he contacted some of his colleagues at the Sorbonne. After doing so, Milgram made more progress in collecting his French data. In the end, he undertook five subtle variations on his basic model in both Norway and France. The results revealed that on average Norwegian and French participants conformed about 62 and 50% of the time, respectively, a difference that proved statistically significant.[36] Although the degree of conformity differed over the five variations, the direction of this difference—Norwegians conforming more than French—remained consistent.

It is important to mention here that before undertaking his experiments, Milgram felt ill-at-ease with deceiving his participants and exposing them to a high-stress situation. He went to great lengths to ensure their well-being by undertaking thorough debriefings as well as administering a post-experimental check-up questionnaire. To Milgram's surprise, most participants did not mind the deception because his intention had been to advance scientific knowledge. Blass argues that these surprising responses had "carryover effects," which probably helped ease Milgram's conscience surrounding his future exposure of participants to deceptive and stressful experiments.[37]

The Invention of the Obedience Studies

When he returned to Harvard from France, Milgram accepted an offer from Asch to edit his latest book. The position required that Milgram move to Princeton University. Working away from friends and under the exacting Asch ensured that the period between October 1959 and June 1960 was a demanding and somewhat depressing time in Milgram's life. Nonetheless, in several significant and overlapping ways, Milgram's stay at Princeton was fruitful for his academic career.

First, far from Harvard's many distractions, the lonely nights at Princeton enabled Milgram to write and submit his Ph.D. dissertation on time. Second, the glowing reviews his thesis received, in conjunction with referees like Allport and Asch, prompted both Harvard and Yale Universities to offer Milgram academic positions. Milgram would accept Yale's offer of a position as Assistant Professor of Social Psychology in September 1960. Third, Milgram started at that time (or soon thereafter) writing an abridged version of his thesis, later accepted for publication in *Scientific American*. This article, published in 1961, announced Milgram's intention to return to the nationality that interested him most.

> We are now planning further research in national characteristics. In a recent seminar at Yale University students were given the task of trying to identify behavioral characteristics that might help to illuminate the Nazi epoch in German history. [...] A team of German and American investigators is planning a series of experiments designed to provide a comparative measure of behavior in the two countries.[38]

After more than a year, however, the project had yet to secure funding even though Milgram continued to solicit contacts in Germany in the hope of one day making his cross-cultural methodological adaptation of Asch's experiment a reality.[39] Milgram knew that success in academia would require him to undertake "an important and distinctive program of research with which to make his mark. He told [Harvard's] Roger Brown that he hoped to find a phenomenon of great consequence, such as Asch had done, then 'worry it to death.'"[40] These ambitions were soon realized through the fourth significant outcome of Milgram's time

at Princeton—a rudimentary conception of an experimental program on the topic of obedience to authority. Based on some interviews in the mid-1970s and early 1980s, the following are Milgram's recollections of this process,

> I was working for Asch in Princeton, New Jersey, in 1959 and 1960. I was thinking about his group-pressure experiment. One of the criticisms that has been made of his experiments is that they lack a surface significance, because after all, an experiment with people making judgments of lines has a manifestly trivial content. So the question I asked myself is, How can this be made into a more humanly significant experiment? And it seemed to me that if, instead of having a group exerting pressure on judgments about lines, the group could somehow induce something more significant from the person, then that might be a step in giving a greater face significance to the behavior induced by the group. Could a group, I asked myself, induce a person to act with severity against another person?[41]

Milgram, in an attempt to raise the stakes of his Ph.D. experiments, had become interested in sources of pressure, which he called "Binding Factors"—powerful bonds that could entrap a person into doing something they might otherwise prefer not to do. Milgram then imagined a situation like Asch's experiment where the researcher placed a naïve participant among a group of actors, but as he later noted,

> instead of confronting the lines on a card, each one of them would have a shock generator. In other words, I transformed Asch's experiment into one in which the group would administer increasingly higher levels of shock to a person, and the question would be to what degree an individual would follow along with the group. That's not yet the obedience experiment, but it's a mental step in that direction.[42]

The next step was conceptual. He,

> wondered whether groups could pressure a person into performing an act whose human import was more readily apparent, perhaps *behaving aggressively toward another person*, say by administering increasingly severe shocks to him. But to study the group effect you would also need an experimental control; you'd have to know how the subject performed without any group pressure. (Italics added)[43]

Asch had resolved the problem of including an experimental control by running his line-judgment exercise in the absence of the group. For Milgram, however, such a solution was unworkable. Why, after all, would an individual, in the absence of the group, consider inflicting intensifying shocks on another person? Milgram had to develop his own solution to this problem. His thoughts,

> shifted, zeroing in on this experimental control. Just how far *would* a person go under the experimenter's *orders* (italics added)? It was an incandescent moment, the fusion of a general idea on obedience with a specific technical procedure. Within a few minutes, dozens of ideas on relevant variables emerged, and the only problem was to get them all down on paper.[44]

Although this innovation provided Milgram with an experimental control, it perhaps unwittingly also introduced into the equation a new binding factor: within the context of a hierarchical chain of command, a superordinate authority figure would attempt to impose his will on a subordinate participant. Nonetheless, this "incandescent moment" initiated Milgram's shift from Asch's conformity-based research toward his own "phenomenon of great consequence": the individual's response to the malevolent demands of an authority figure.

So why did Milgram specifically select the word "orders"? Its selection was probably due to the influence of the common post-World War Two perception that the Holocaust was associated with blind obedience to authority. Immediately following the defeat of Nazi Germany, the victorious Allies placed the surviving Nazi elite on trial at Nuremberg for war crimes. At the time Milgram was writing his Bar Mitzvah speech, most of those in the dock were attempting to evade responsibility for the Holocaust by claiming that they were just following executive orders.[45] Thereafter, stereotypes of a heightened German propensity to obey the orders of superiors emerged in populist literature, buttressed by an apparently German authoritarian style of raising children, Nazi indoctrination, pledges of obedience to Hitler, and even the hypnotic power of the Führer's personality to induce blind obedience.[46] Scholars like Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford only strengthened the common association between obedience to authority, Germans, and the Holocaust. Their influential book, *The Authoritarian Personality*, attributed the antisemitism believed to have culminated in the Holocaust to authoritarian personality traits.[47] A post-World War Two "obedience to authority" zeitgeist emerged. As Elms notes,

> Before Milgram, creative writers had incorporated striking incidents of obedience into novels, poems, and screenplays. Historians had written factual accounts of remarkably obedient individuals and groups. Psychologists had developed F[ascist]…and other scales to measure inclinations towards authoritarian tyranny and subservience.[48]
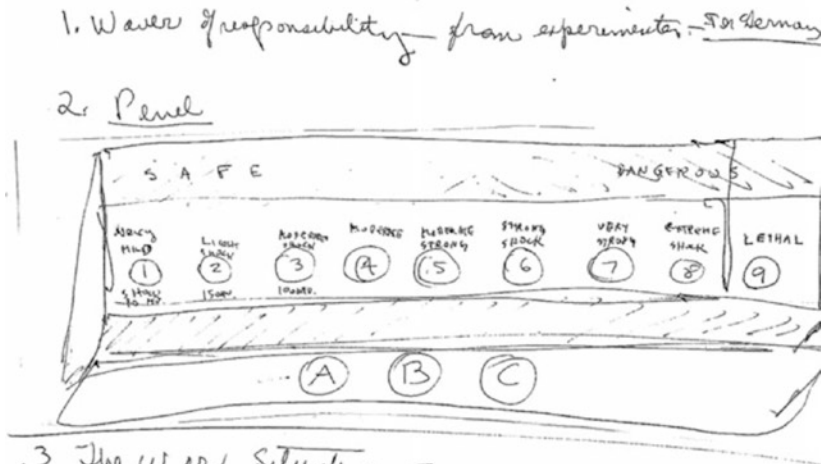
Blass offers the possibility that the catalytic spark of inspiration for Milgram's incorporation of "orders" into his research idea was the 11 May 1960 capture of the Nazi bureaucrat Adolf Eichmann in Argentina.[49] Eichmann was adamant that in organizing the transportation of millions of Jews to their deaths, he was just following superiors' orders.[50] Indeed, in a letter to Professor Daniel Katz dated 24 December 1961, Milgram states, "The experiments were designed in May 1960."[51] So concurrently with Eichmann's heavily publicized capture, Milgram was manipulating Asch's study into "a humanly more significant experiment" where participants received "orders" to behave "aggressively toward another person."

In fact, there are other documents (circa 1960) that appear to capture Milgram's "incandescent moment,"

> an objective dimension, the lower end of which does not constitute an objectionable act, and the upper end of which does. (It is typical of many social acts that quantiative [*sic*] changes lead to entir[e]ly new qualitative states.) We can then start out by giving the subject commands from the lower end. (Tap him.) And gradually proceed to more intensive commands. (Slug him.) Some kind of scale of this sort is needed. A second requirement of domestication is to give the command some institutional justification.[52]

Here Milgram mentions a graduated means of behaving "aggressively toward another person"—an intensifying "scale[d]" physical assault. But he was left with the problem of participants needing a motivation to instigate this physical assault—an "institutional justification." Milgram's inchoate idea then advances (see Fig. 3.1). Moving away from a probably unworkable physical assault, Milgram decides to instead have participants inflict intensifying electrical shocks. Here Milgram also mentions the "institutional justification" he intended to use to encourage participants to inflict the shocks: a "pledge to obey":

The document reads,

Fig. 3.1   A circa 1960 document titled "Studies in Obedience"

1. Waver [*sic*] of responsibility—from experimenter—<u>For Germa[n]y</u>
2. <u>Panel</u>

   [Sketch of a nine-switch shock generator with the final shock labeled "LETHAL"]
3. The War Situation –

   2 naive S[ubject]'s. One must shock the other –

   1 way switch. Can be controlled by E.
4. <u>Working in teams:</u>
5. <u>The Pledge</u>. Subjects pledge to obey. │Because of certain possible hazards, the S. must adhere carefully to the instructions of the Exp[erimen]t[e]r.[53]

Milgram seems to have had in mind an Asch-like group experiment—"working in teams"—in which all involved were to accept a "pledge to obey" the experimenter's orders. Most of those involved would be actors, but two would be naïve participants (one presumably the victim and the other the inflictor of harm). It appears Milgram imagined that the infliction of intense shocks would reflect a war-like situation in which the inflictor could displace responsibility for their actions. Only parts of these documents resemble Milgram's recollections in the mid-1970s and early 1980s surrounding his invention of the basic procedure. He clearly dropped the idea to "Tap" then "Slug" the victim, and few of the actual variations he undertook involved actors working in teams. Also, although the eventual experiments would include a waiver of responsibility and a shock generator that inflicted escalating electrical shocks, the actual machine did not have nine switches and no participant took a "pledge to obey" orders to eventually inflict a "LETHAL" shock. Even so, this document bolsters the argument that the post-World War Two obedience zeitgeist influenced Milgram's initial conception of the Obedience experiments. They, therefore, seem to reveal a missing component from his official account of the invention of the Obedience experiments: his injection into the basic procedure of what he suspected were the Nazi regime's most effective techniques to coax ordinary people to inflict harm—displacement of responsibility, hierarchical

obedience to authority, a pledge to obey orders to inflict harm, small steps in an increasingly radical direction, all in the context of a war-like environment. Perhaps Milgram's post hoc recollections were orientated toward a range of presentational concerns. Nonetheless, what is clearer and indisputable is that by 1960, the basic procedure was starting to take shape.

Conclusion

Over time the gradual confluence of several key factors contributed to Milgram's conception of the Obedience experiments. These factors include Milgram's long-term intellectual curiosity about the Holocaust, the tutelage of several Harvard scholars, Solomon Asch's Group Pressure-Conformity experiments, and the populist post-World War Two zeitgeist that tended to associate obedience to authority with Germany's perpetration of the Holocaust. Thus, the inchoate obedience research idea drew upon key ingredients Milgram suspected were needed to produce a Holocaust-like event: a command hierarchy of superordinate authority figures and subordinates, a pledge to obey orders, group pressure, and a task that necessitated the gradually-escalating infliction of harm on another person.

According to Blass, Milgram often asked questions and then "invent(ed) methods suited for them,"[54] and that procedure rings true here. His base question of interest was how might one get ordinary people to harm other human beings? An interest in the Holocaust and obedience, however, led him to modify the question: can orders from an authority figure lead others to inflict harm? As Milgram said in his early notes, "Stated most simply, the basic command is to hurt another person." Milgram, perhaps sensing the unethical nature of this research idea, then wrote, "Don't [s]ay this in grant."[55] Nonetheless, incorporating and building upon all he had learned through his Ph.D. research, Milgram went on to invent and then, as the following chapter will illustrate, refine an experimental method capable of producing empirical results that he hoped might answer long-held questions he had surrounding the extermination of European Jews. This experimental procedure would, after further refinement, extend the participants' violent capabilities and help generate the kind of results he desired.

Notes

1. Marcus (1974, p. 2).
2. Blass (2012, p. 197).
3. Tavris (1974b, p. 75).
4. Quoted in Tavris (1974a, p. 77).
5. Blass (2004, p. 8).
6. Quoted in Blass (1998, p. 49).
7. Fermaglich (2006, p. 100).
8. Marrus (1997, p. 257).
9. Tavris (1974a, p. 77).
10. Tavris (1974a, p. 77).
11. Blass (2004, pp. 11–12).
12. Blass (2004, p. 13).
13. Blass (2004, pp. 13–14).
14. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 142).
15. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 142).
16. Blass (2004, pp. 14–16).
17. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 142).
18. Blass (2004, p. 31).
19. Asch (1958).
20. Asch (1958, pp. 176–177).
21. SMP, Box 43, Folder 124.
22. Tavris (1974a, p. 77).
23. Milgram (1961, p. 48).
24. Blass (2004, p. 53).
25. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 144).
26. In the edited notes of Milgram's Ph.D. thesis is the following handwritten note: "REFERENcES [*sic*] New Yorker Magazine October 11th 1958 "Letter from PAris" [*sic*] brief but typical reference to fact that the French are [the] most individualistic people in the world" (SMP, Box 43, Folder 125).
27. For an example of literature perpetuating this German stereotype, see Dicks (1950, p. 137).
28. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 144).
29. SMP, Box 1, Folder C.
30. SMP, Box 1, Folder C.
31. Blass (2004, pp. 33–34).
32. Blass (2004, p. 41).
33. Quoted in Russell (2011, pp. 144–145).
34. Blass (2004, pp. 48, 50).
35. Quoted in Blass (2002, pp. 71–72).

36. Blass (2004, pp. 50–51).
37. Blass (2004, p. 54).
38. Milgram (1961, p. 51).
39. See the correspondence between Milgram and the German academic Robert Arndt during April 1962 (SMP, Box 55, Folder 5).
40. Blass (2004, pp. 61–62).
41. Quoted in Evans (1980, p. 188).
42. Quoted in Evans (1980, pp. 188–189).
43. Quoted in Tavris (1974a, p. 80).
44. Quoted in Tavris (1974a, p. 80).
45. Szejnmann (2008, pp. 28–29).
46. See Dicks (1950, p. 137), Fromm (1973, pp. 413–414), Koenigsberg (2009, p. 5), and Lee (1996, p. 24).
47. Adorno et al. (1950).
48. Elms (1995, p. 22; see also De Swaan 2015, p. 253). This zeitgeist certainly had a powerful influence on Milgram's formulation of the idea for his Ph.D. thesis (based on "the things I have read and seen" about French and German nationals). "I came across many statements," he wrote, "which implied that Germans tended to obey orders more conscientious[ly] than Americans" (quoted in Fermaglich 2006, p. 88).
49. Blass (2004, p. 63).
50. Cesarani (2004, p. 277).
51. SMP, Box 55, Folder 12.
52. SMP, Box 46, Folder 165.
53. Quoted in Russell (2009, p. 47).
54. Blass (2004, p. 240).
55. SMP, Box 46, Folder 165.

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CHAPTER 4

How Milgram Ensured Most Participants Completed the First Official Experiment

In this chapter, I discuss how Milgram came up with a baseline procedure that in its first official trial produced a 65% completion rate. There is little published information available on the invention of this procedure, which did not leap suddenly from the depths of Milgram's imagination in its complete form. Nor did Milgram foresee before the pilot studies that the basic official procedure would end in so many participants inflicting every shock. Instead, evidence gleaned from Milgram's personal archive shows the procedure developed following a protracted and circuitous learning process. This learning process involved a combination of Milgram drawing on his past experiences, shrewd intuition, and reliance on the ad hoc exploratory method of discovery.[1] Harré and Secord clarify that, unlike with the more traditional approach of hypothesis testing, during "exploratory studies a scientist has no very clear idea what will happen, and aims to find out." Using their intuition, the scientist has "a feeling for the 'direction' in which to go (increase the pressure and see what happens) but no clear expectations of what to expect."[2] More specifically, they deploy, as their vehicle of discovery, a number of ad hoc trial-and-error pilot studies—"see what happens"—in the pursuit of a vaguely delineated outcome. During such journeys, unexpected yet serendipitous discoveries sometimes emerge.

The First Obedience to Authority
Research Proposal

In September of 1960, Milgram arrived at Yale University and embarked upon what would become a highly creative academic career. By early October, he had submitted his first official research proposal. Given his recent "incandescent moment" at Princeton, it is surprising that this proposal did not focus on obedience, but rather an observational study on the topic of art appreciation under the influence of the drug mescaline.[3] The proposal failed to attract funding and Milgram never pursued the research. Even so, if Milgram only several months earlier had had an apparently brilliant idea involving "orders" to "inflict harm," why, upon arriving at Yale, did he propose a different topic of research? It seems likely that while he sensed the potential of the obedience to authority idea, he had come to suspect it needed further refinement.

To capture the attention of academia, Milgram knew he had to develop an experiment that in the first official trial produced eye-catching results. An experiment that produced a low completion rate in response to "harmful" orders was predictable and would hardly equate to a "phenomenon of great consequence." In a document titled "Studies in Obedience" that probably dates to 1960, Milgram highlights the main coercive technique he intended to deploy to achieve his initial (unofficial) goal. "In order to create the strongest obedience situation…" he intended to "[i]ntegrate…group process[es]."[4] That is, his aim was to use Asch-like peer pressure to obtain a high completion rate. Would this technique (the same as outlined in Fig. 3.1) produce the dramatic results he needed to make his mark? Would participants accept a transparently Nazi-sounding "pledge to obey" orders to inflict an apparently "LETHAL" shock? The changes he soon made to his plan would suggest he did not believe they would.

On 14 October 1960, Milgram submitted his first obedience to authority research proposal to the Office of Naval Research. The proposal stated, "Given that a person is confronted with a particular set of commands 'more or less' appropriate to a laboratory situation, we may ask which conditions increase his compliance, and which make him less likely to comply."[5] Milgram then went on to describe the basic experimental procedure he intended to employ, which, without having conducted any pilot studies, already resembled the one he would later settle on. The participant,

operates a control panel, consisting of a series of switches set in a line. The switch at the left is labelled 'l-Very Light Shock'; the next switch is labelled '2-Light Shock'; and so on through moderate, strong, very strong, etc.… the switch at the extreme right is labelled '15-Extreme Shock: Danger.' […] It goes without saying that…the victim…does not in reality suffer, but is a confederate of the experimenter…[and] is placed behind a semi-transluscent [*sic*] screen so that [the] subject…can perceive his reactions only dimly. […] Internal resistances become stronger, and at a certain point he refuses to go on with the experiment. Behavior prior to this rupture we shall consider as obedience […] The point of rupture is the act of disobedience.[6]

Around the same time, Milgram produced the most detailed sketch yet of what he envisioned the shock "control panel" would look like (Fig. 4.1).

Milgram was aware that deceiving participants into thinking they were inflicting shocks on another person would likely generate what he later termed "strain": intense feelings of internal tension.[7] Such feelings might encourage disobedience, thus detracting from his initial goal to create "the strongest obedience situation." Consequently, Milgram attempted to neutralize such feelings by introducing to the basic procedure what, in his book, he would call "Strain Resolving Mechanisms"—techniques to reduce the tensions normally experienced by a person inflicting harm.[8] The shock generator was itself a strain resolving mechanism, as Milgram noted some years later:

> [C]reating physical distance between the subject and victim, and dampening the painful cries of the victim, reduces strain. The shock generator itself constitutes an important buffer, a precise and impressive instrument that creates a sharp discontinuity between the ease required to depress one of its thirty switches and the strength of impact on the victim. The depression of a switch is precise, scientific, and impersonal. If our subjects had to strike the victim with their fists, they would be more reluctant to do so.[9]

Milgram's previous experience as a student of psychology, in which punishment in the form of electrical shocks during experiments was common,[10] probably influenced his selection of this means of inflicting harm. He clearly sensed intuitively that it would be easier to coerce participants into using such an "impersonal" harm-inflicting device than to get them to "Tap" then "Slug" a victim. In his book, Milgram outlines his rationale for selecting shocks as the vehicle for inflicting harm:
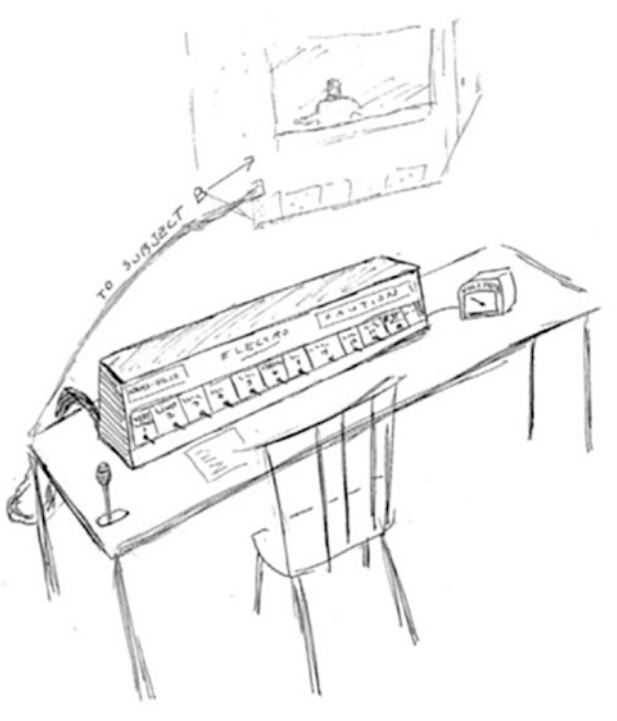
Fig. 4.1 Milgram's sketch of an eleven-switch control panel dated "1960." Participants could see the person being "shocked" through a semi-translucent screen (SMP, Box 17, Folder 246)

> For technical reasons, the delivery of electric shock was chosen for the study. It seemed suitable, first, because it would be easy for the subject to understand the notion that shocks can be graded in intensity; second, its use would be consistent with the general scientific aura of the laboratory; and finally, it would be relatively easy to simulate the administration of shock in the laboratory.[11]

In his proposal to the Office of Naval Research, Milgram also introduced new strain resolving mechanisms to the basic procedure. Instead of his so-called pledge to obey, Milgram decided that a more "acceptable rationale" for inflicting excruciating electrical shocks on an innocent

person "must be provided." This rationale was to be "achieved by setting the experiment in a context of 'social learning.'" Milgram writes, "Subjects believe they are performing in an experiment in human learning. In the course of the experiment one subject finds that it is part of his role to administer 'negative reinforcements' [light electrical shocks] to another subject."[12] By contributing to some greater good, Milgram cunningly transformed the infliction of harm from "something evil" (shocking an innocent person) into something "good" (advancing "human learning")[13]—a powerful strain resolving technique Adams and Belfour term moral inversion.[14] Another new strain resolving mechanism included in this proposal saw the last shock switch label changed from "LETHAL" to "15-Extreme Shock: Danger." Participants were perhaps more likely to deploy a more ambiguously labeled final shock than one with an unequivocally destructive heading.

Although Milgram aspired to capture in a controlled laboratory setting conditions he suspected would lead to Holocaust-like behavior, by the first proposal he had realized that presenting participants with a "pledge to obey" orders to inflict a "LETHAL" shock would probably fail to create the "strongest obedience situation." Consequently, he considered a less stressful and more "acceptable" justification necessary to convince participants to participate in an action that, at worst, now had a more ambiguous outcome. These modifications were likely to aid Milgram's goal of obtaining a high baseline completion rate. They also, however, meant the basic experimental procedure looked a little less like the Holocaust (a point later raised by critics of the Milgram-Holocaust linkage). Despite these compromises, however, Milgram's focus remained on the Holocaust. One of four potential variations on the baseline experiment presented in the first proposal seems to mirror the Nazi regime's reliance on propaganda: "Obedience and Propaganda Concerning the Victim: To what extent can higher compliance be extracted by portraying the victim in unflattering terms?"[15] Milgram's research notes reveal the lengths to which he went to develop this variation:

> Propaganda [*sic*] concerning the victim: I might say [to the subject] about the…[learner] in there, first that he is being paid 35 dollars. […] Secondly, he…wanted to be a…[learner]. He said…those Yale fairies [as teachers] were pretty stupid. […] This person, I might add, has been in court many times but has never been convicted, because of technicalities of the law, although it was established beyond any doubt that he had beat up and

robbed an old man…* Still…I don't see that there is any special reason to exclude him, though I have certain doubts. Anyway, let's begin. *In fact, he arrogantly boasts that he did this and that the law can't touch him.[16]

The first proposal also mentions dividing the research program into two sections. In the first, participants would run through the experiment alone (that is, only in the presence of the experimenter and the partially visible learner). In the second, the participant would be one of several members of a group. After describing the first procedure, Milgram clarified the purpose of the second:

> Now transform the situation to one in which the critical subject is but one member of a group, and each member faces a control panel. […] the experiment is designed so that subject B [the learner] receives his negative reinforcement only when all members of the group depress their control board switches in succession. Unknown to the critical subject, the first four members of the group are confederates [actors] of the experimenter, and willingly comply with E's commands on every occasion.[17]

How optimistic was Milgram that this "group dynamics" experiment would "create the strongest obedience situation"?

> My guess is, on the basis of considerable experience with experiments in group pressure, that certain persons will follow the group through all degrees of compliance, even to the point of administering a shock labelled 'extremely dangerous'. This guess awaits empirical confirmation.[18]

Despite his "incandescent" moment, Milgram was not yet sure about the kinds of results the "alone" experiments might produce. However, he hazarded a guess. "Presumably, the addition of group pressure will cause the critical subject to comply with the experimental commands to a far higher degree than in the 'alone' situation."[19] Because Milgram was not optimistic about the "alone" series, he thought its most important function would be to "serve as necessary controls for the group experiments. It is only by using the alone situation as a standard that one can assess the strength of group pressure in the later studies."[20] Ultimately, however, Milgram was not sure how participants might react to the potentially binding force of the experimenter's orders, so he cautiously added that the "alone" conditions were still "important in their own right."[21]

And should the "alone" pilot produce interesting results, it had an obvious Asch-like control experiment: would a lone participant complete with no orders to continue? However, at this early stage, Milgram, not yet realizing the potential of his research idea, was content to build on Asch's legacy rather than construct a unique path of his own. Consequently, the "Obedience and Group Process" experiments "constitute[d] the major concern of the present research."[22]

The first research proposal, then, contained all the key features of what would become the Obedience to Authority experiments; a research idea that Milgram intuitively sensed might just work. Milgram's initial (unofficial) goal was to ensure that during the first official (baseline) trial, a large proportion of participants inflicted all the shocks. For this reason, he continued to add to the inchoate experimental procedure numerous binding factors and strain resolving mechanisms. Upon achieving his initial goal, Milgram then planned to move on to the "crux of the study"[23]: to discover why so many participants completed the first official trial. To achieve this second and more official goal, he would run numerous slight variations on the first official baseline with the intention of isolating what conditions most likely caused both obedience and defiance.[24] To test the viability of his idea, all that remained was to run a series of pilot studies. Nothing came of the proposal sent to the Office of Naval Research, so in mid-November 1960, Milgram sent it to three other funding agencies.

The 1960–1961 Winter Pilot Studies

Although Milgram almost certainly would have run a pilot study on his own volition eventually, the impetus to do so came not from him but his students. To give his Psychology of Small Groups class some practical experience in conducting an actual experiment, Milgram provided two potential research ideas: the obedience pilot and an experiment on group communications. By a narrow margin, the class opted to test-run the obedience pilot.[25] Although Milgram likely sensed he was onto something interesting, he was not yet aware of just how much potential the research idea had. Armed with one of his sketches and a small budget, the students built a rather crude looking 12-switch shock generator where each switch ostensibly represented an increase in 30 volts ending in a maximum 330-volt "shock" (Fig. 4.2).

Fig. 4.2 12-switch prototype labeled (top left) "SHOCK GENERATOR TYPE ZL DYSON INSTRUMENT COMPANY WALTHAM MASS" (SMP, Box 45, Folder 160)

Having built the shock generator, Milgram and his class attempted to refine both the "group" and the "alone" (control) conditions into workable experimental procedures. By late November 1960, the class was ready to run what Milgram termed the "winter pilot studies" using Yale students as participants.[26] Milgram wrote, "Before an experiment is carried out, it is often hard to visualize exactly what its flavor would be. Thus, there was a certain amount of excitement and anticipation as we awaited the first subject. The study…was not very well controlled."[27] The "group" experiment confirmed Milgram's prediction that some people would follow along with the group "or at most, fall one step behind."[28] In the "alone" test-runs, however, "the behavior of the subjects astonished the undergraduates, and me as well."[29] Just before running the "alone" control, Milgram had "conjectured that persons would not, in general, go above the level of 'Strong Shock'" [150 volts].[30] However, "In practice, many subjects were willing to administer the most extreme shocks available when commanded by the experimenter."[31] Milgram later quantified the result—"about 60% of them were fully obedient."[32] The experimenter's commands appeared to be a far more powerful binding factor than Milgram had anticipated.

The "alone" pilot astonished his students. Yet, while "there was a general sense that something extraordinary had happened," Milgram did "not believe that the students could fully appreciate the significance of what they were viewing…"[33] But he could. Milgram likely then realized that if he used the "alone" experiment not as a control but as a stand-alone series of experiments, he would be exploring a phenomenon that had little to do with group conformity and everything to do with obedience to authority. Pursuing the "alone" series could result in the development of his own research legacy, rather than contribute to Asch's. Around this time Milgram wrote to Harvard Professor Jerome Bruner, "My hope is that the obedience experiments will take their place along with the studies of Sherif, Lewin and Asch."[34] Ambitions of fame and fortune may indeed have taken hold of Milgram. In Yale University's competitive promotions system, where few new faculty were offered tenured positions, a series of famous experiments would surely help to advance and secure an Ivy League academic career.

Milgram's heightened appreciation for the "alone" pilot may also have been the result of his inclusion of a variety of variables—particularly including "orders" to inflict harm—that he suspected may have played some role in producing the Holocaust. In other words, what the students deemed a fascinating spectacle, Milgram sensed revealed something akin to a Holocaust scenario played out in a laboratory setting. The first pilot was a watershed moment. Within the first few months of embarking on his academic career, Milgram believed he had found his "phenomenon of great consequence."

With an eye on his second goal—identify why so many completed the first (baseline) experiment—Milgram now introduced subtle changes to the "alone" procedure during the remaining pilot trials.[35] In one of these changes, he increased the intensity of the learner's protests because the first version "didn't seem to have as much effect as I thought it would or should."[36] Despite having already obtained completion rates beyond his initial expectations, Milgram increased this source of strain by having "more violent protestation on the part of the person getting the shock."[37] During these exploratory pilots, Milgram observed some unexpected behaviors:

> Subjects frequently averted their eyes from the person they were shocking, often turning their heads in an awkward and conspicuous manner. One subject explained: 'I didn't want to see the consequences of what I had

done.' […] Observers write: ['] […] When this fact was brought to their attention they indicated that it caused them discomfort to watch the victim in agony. We note, however, that although the subject refuses to look at the victim, he continues to administer shocks['].[38]

This observation intrigued Milgram, first because instead of utilizing the strain resolving mechanisms, Milgram supplied them with participants appeared to invent their own, and second because it raised the question what would happen if, in the next pilot, he substituted his semi-translucent screen with a solid wall? Would doing so make it even easier for participants to inflict every shock? Would introducing a partition perhaps increase the completion rate above the first pilot's 60% figure, thus edging Milgram ever closer to his preconceived goal "to create the strongest obedience situation"?

Although the pilots generated some startling results and hinted at the project's immense research potential, Milgram remained cautious about his students' poorly controlled experiments. He later conceded that there was "something" about them that "I was never convinced [*sic*] of."[39] Milgram did not clarify, but his subsequent actions hint at his suspicion that, due to a rather disjointed procedure, bogus-looking shock generator, and some of his students' poor acting skills,[40] some participants completed the pilots because they did not believe the learner was really being harmed. Milgram desired a high completion rate, but it was also of crucial importance to him that participants were convinced that the learner was actually being shocked. With the intention of strengthening the internal validity of his basic experimental procedure, Milgram addressed all three of these issues as best as he could. He suspected, however, that the more believable the experiments, the more resistant the participants would become in completing them. This resistance could threaten the achievement of his initial goal to produce a striking baseline completion rate. So, to secure goal achievement, Milgram resolved to introduce even more binding factors and strain resolving mechanisms into his first official "alone" procedure.

One such addition was a "Waver [*sic*] of responsibility" first suggested in Fig. 3.1. A document titled "Report on Pilot Resarch [*sic*]" dated 4 December 1960 points out that "One major argument of subjects" who successfully stopped the experiment was that because "the victim has volunteered for the experiment," it was the learner's right as a volunteer

to "leave whenever he wants to."[41] This argument seemed to embolden some participants to resist the experimenter's demands to continue. To neutralize this argument, Milgram proposed that,

> the following change should be made;…the assistant should report to the main experimenter that the subject does not want to continue […] Possible conversation:…EXPERIMENTER: I Have responsibility for this situation, and I say, let's go on with the experiment. According to the rules when the subject gives a wrong answer or no answer he will receive an electric shock. Now if he refused to answer on every occasion he will just get shocked. So it is in his interest to learn the correct responses; now, let[']s go on. Proceed with the next question.[42]

If the participant accepted that the experimenter was responsible for any harm, the participant's apprehension about continuing might subside. This idea was refined further in the official research program to the point that the experimenter responded to any form of resistance by curtly stating, "I'm responsible for anything that happens to him [the learner]. Continue please."[43]

The Second Research Proposal

After the first pilot studies, Milgram completed a second research proposal on 25 January 1961. He sent this proposal to the National Science Foundation, which, of the three funding agencies approached, appeared the most receptive. Much like the first, the second research proposal began with a detailed overview of the procedural technique. However, this time an overview of the first pilots, which had "yielded unexpected results of considerable interest," bolstered the project's potential. Milgram explained that he was unsure why so many participants had inflicted every shock, but "with an ultimate view toward theoretical integration," he intended to find out.[44] At this time, obedience remained a largely unexplored research area so, instead of traditional hypothesis testing, Milgram proposed a more exploratory investigative approach to theoretical development. Again, the crux of the study was to run a standardized baseline experiment through numerous slight variations until the most salient variables responsible for the initial result emerged. In Milgram's words, the research would "illuminate the process of

obedience" by "systematically vary[ing] the factors we believe alter the degree of obedience to the experimental commands."[45] This approach to theoretical development was possible because the baseline procedure was amenable to "extensive parametric variation."[46] And with a free hand to test ad hoc and eliminate potential explanations that failed to stand up, he believed it was only a matter of time before the strongest theoretical account emerged.

The second proposal also presented several new variations on the basic experimental procedure that, after observing the winter pretests, Milgram had come to suspect might significantly alter the completion rate. His observation that some participants looked away from the pained learner but continued to inflict shocks prompted the first variation detailed in the proposal. Milgram suspected that,

> the salience of the victim may in some degree regulate their performance. This can be tested by varying the 'immediacy' of the victim. Three conditions are suggested: 1) the victim is completely within view of the subject, without obstruction of any kind between them; 2) the victim is placed behind soundproof glass, as in the pilot studies; 3) the victim is placed in another room, and though his presence is assured, can neither be seen nor heard by the subject.[47]

The third condition was likely to generate the highest completion rate. With Milgram's goal being to "maximize obedience" in the first official experiment, this variation would surely make an eye-catching introductory publication.

Another variation Milgram proposed related to his suspicion that the pilot study's high completion rates may have been due to a characteristic apparently unique to the participant pool: Yale students' competitive, "cut-throat" nature. Milgram, therefore, suggested the possibility of "two replications...with adult populations."[48] Soon afterward, he changed this suggestion to only adult participants from the wider New Haven community.

A further change saw the so-called propaganda variation slip from second to last place in the line-up, and somewhat mysteriously, was later dropped altogether. But perhaps the greatest change in the second proposal is concerned about the issue of "obedience and group process." Although "group" experiments would still "constitute a major concern of the present research," given the results of the first pilots, they would be

relegated to a couple of minor variations.[49] The greater focus Milgram now placed on the "alone" over the "group" variations illustrates how much the research idea had moved away from Asch's experiments. Even so, it is important to note that the proposed research still retained a particular feature that Milgram believed made Asch's experiment "a Great Experiment." Specifically, Asch's group/conformity experiment forced participants to resolve a seemingly "private" internal "conflict" to either conform with or rebel against the group. Similarly, Milgram's experiment required that participants resolve a seemingly private conflict: to obey or disobey a legitimate authority figure demanding that they inflict intense shocks on an innocent person.

But even this similarity had evolved into something new. By the second proposal, Milgram conveyed his belief that is inherent within his experiment's dilemma—but absent from Asch's—was a significant moral dimension. That is, in Milgram's view, across all societies there exists a widely held axiom that it is a "fundamental breach of moral conduct to hurt another person against his will."[50] Any decision to complete his experiment would (unlike the trivial implications of conforming in Asch's experiments) necessitate the violation of this moral axiom. Milgram believed that inherent within his experimental paradigm was a wrong and a right way of resolving the moral dilemma, and therefore he was convinced that completing the experiment was, for participants, a moral failure.[51]

On 3 May 1961, the National Science Foundation committee agreed to fund the Obedience studies.[52] However, soon after this, the government funding body became concerned about an aspect of Milgram's proposal and considered withdrawing its earlier offer. On 5 July 1961, Milgram called the National Science Foundation to find out why they had not sent him an official letter confirming his grant. Mrs. Rubenstein informed Milgram that the director had some reservations about the potentially negative effect of the research on participants.[53] Then a telephone memo dated 6 July 1961 stated, "2 P.M. Mrs. Rubenstein called from the NSF to convey the following information. She had spoken to assistants to the director (Waterman) and it would seem that the objections have been cleared up."[54] It transpires that after holding a committee meeting, the director of the National Science Foundation, Alan T. Waterman, officially informed Yale University on 13 July that the original decision to fund Milgram's research had been upheld.[55]

During this no-doubt stressful period, Milgram had hired graduate psychology student Alan Elms to be his research assistant. Elms' task was to ensure a continuous supply of adult participants from the wider New Haven community. In a letter dated 27 June 1961, Milgram wrote, "The goal this summer is to run from 250 to 300 subjects in nine or ten experimental conditions. Only if this is accomplished can the summer be considered a success."[56] On the topic of recruitment, Milgram added, "The advertisement was placed in the New Haven Register and yielded a disappointingly low response. There is no immediate crisis, however, since we do have about 300 qualified applicants."[57] The low response rate was a little surprising considering Milgram offering prospective participants $4.50 per session, which at the time was a generous but not an excessive sum of money. It could, of course, be argued that financial remuneration introduced yet another binding factor to the basic procedure—a contractual obligation to do as one is asked and complete the experiment. In a letter to Elms, Milgram alluded to the experiments' inherent moral dimension, while drawing an analogy between the Obedience studies and the Holocaust,

> But before long, in your role of Solicitor General, you will have to think of ways to deliver more people to the laboratory […] I will admit it bears some ressemblence [*sic*] to Mr. Eichman's [*sic*] position, but <u>you</u> at least should have no misconceptions of what <u>we</u> do with our daily quota. We give them a chance to resist the commands of malevolent authority and assert their alliance with morality.[58]

Milgram also mentioned to Elms that a new shock generator (Fig. 4.3) "is almost done and looks thoroughly professional." Soon after, Milgram informed Henry Riecken (Head of the National Science Foundation Office of Social Sciences), "The new device passed the acid test when two electrical engineers examined the instrument and failed to realize it was a simulated device. Details were very carefully handled to insure an appearance of authenticity."[59]

Apart from the generator's more professional appearance, one obvious difference between it and Milgram's students' machine is 30 rather than 12 switches. Instead of increasing in 30-volt increments ending in a 330-volt shock, the new version provided 15-volt increases and a much higher 450-volt maximum shock. These modifications arguably introduced yet another binding factor with the intention of better ensuring a

Fig. 4.3 Stanley Milgram with his 30 switch shock generator (Photo courtesy of Alexandra Milgram), labeled (top left) "SHOCK GENERATOR, TYPE ZLB, DYSON INSTRUMENT COMPANY, WALTHAM, MASS. OUTPUT 15 VOLTS—450 VOLTS" (Blass [2004, p. 79])

high baseline completion rate. In the second research proposal, Milgram had asked, "if one is trying to maximize obedience, is it better to inform a person of the worst of what he may be asked to do at the outset, or is compliance best extracted piecemeal?"[60] But it was Gilbert[61] who most explicitly discerned a connection between the obedience experiments' gradual escalation of shock intensity and a piecemeal approach to persuasion known as the "foot-in-the-door" technique.[62] This technique proposes that persons are more likely to agree to a significant request if it is preceded by a comparatively insignificant request. From Milgram's first idea ("Tap" then "Slug" the victim) to the development of the final shock generator (Fig. 4.3), the formulation of his research idea had relied upon the coercive power of piecemeal compliance. However, delineating Milgram's start-to-finish journey reveals something Gilbert missed. With his eye always trained toward his initial goal of maximizing the baseline completion rate, Milgram actually extended on the "foot-in-the-door" logic. Compared to his eleven-switch sketch (Fig. 3.1) and the students' twelve switch shock generator (Fig. 4.2), the final version had many more smaller yet increasingly radical steps (30 switches in only 15-volt increments), which ended in the "infliction" of a more powerful final 450-volt shock—what Dolinski and Grzyb term the "multiple feet-in-the-door" effect.[63]

The Summer Pilot Studies

Armed with this new shock generator, Milgram and Elms worked assiduously in June and July 1961 to "fine-tune" the basic experimental procedure to Milgram's "exacting specifications."[64] Across 27 July, 2 and 4 August, Milgram (acting for the most part as the learner) and Elms (as the experimenter) embarked on a second series of pilot studies. Using only adults from the New Haven community, the pair tested Milgram's idea of manipulating the proximity of the learner through the introduction of a solid partition into the basic experimental procedure. According to Milgram's research notebook dated 6 August 1961, the first trial tested the Voice-Feedback condition (in which the participant could hear the isolated learner's verbal responses to being "shocked"). Then they ran what Milgram later termed the "Truly Remote Pilot" where participants were led to suspect that the learner was receiving shocks even though the learner could not be seen or heard at all. Initially, there were problems—a few "subjects penetrated the cover story." However, Milgram made some minor refinements, following which the "Procedure worked extremely well" with "No penetration."[65] Blass perhaps best captured what Milgram was trying to achieve during these pilots when he said "Pretest subjects were 'run' through the procedure until all the kinks were worked out."[66]

With the basic procedure running smoothly, the Truly Remote Pilot reinforced for Milgram how easy it was going to be to obtain a high rate of obedience. "In the absence of protests from the learner, virtually all subjects, once commanded, went blithely to the end of the board, seemingly indifferent to the verbal designations ('Extreme Shock' and 'Danger: Severe Shock')."[67] With the completion rate approaching 100%, the Truly Remote Pilot achieved Milgram's preconceived goal. He was now ready to run the first official baseline experiment, which *he knew* would produce a surprisingly high completion rate. Doing so, however, raised an unanticipated problem:

> This deprived us of an adequate basis for scaling obedient tendencies. A force had to be introduced that would strengthen the subject's resistance to the experimenter's commands, and reveal individual difference in terms of a distribution of break-off points.[68]

So, with the intention of reducing slightly the completion rate, Milgram decided that the first official baseline experiment would include at least some perceptual feedback—auditory stimulation. Milgram instructed the learner to kick the wall and then fall silent after the participant inflicted the 300 and 315-volt shocks. In contrast with Milgram's usual approach of trying to reduce the tension participants experienced, this adaptation was intended to slightly increase their levels of strain. So even before the first official experiment, Milgram sensed that he had a great deal of control over the completion rate: he had learned how to get whatever (baseline) results he desired.

Something else the summer pilots revealed was, after Elms took a turn at playing the learner, an older and more convincing actor in this role would be needed for the official experiments. Milgram hired actors who he thought, after much practice, would appear more authentic and convincing than either Elms or himself had. It was around this time that Milgram hired John Williams and James McDonough to play the central roles of experimenter and learner respectively. He invited the two men to observe the session on 4th August, and although neither of them were professional actors—Williams was a high-school biology teacher and McDonough a payroll auditor—both proved convincing, especially after two weeks of rehearsals,[69] as Milgram's *Obedience (A Filmed Experiment)* illustrates.[70]

Obtaining a competent and convincing experimental team made obvious sense, but Milgram's notes taken during McDonough's job interview indicates that acting ability was not the most important consideration. "*Definitely desired as victim[.] The only trouble is he cannot act to[o] well – in my estimation." More specifically, McDonough, "probably could not act face to face".[71] Although Milgram considered McDonough's inability to act a weakness, there was something else about him that made him perfect in Milgram's judgment. "This man would be perfect as a victim" because "he is mild and submissive; not at all academic." McDonough was "affable" and "unthreatening."[72] It seems Milgram intuitively desired a benign learner because he sensed that participants were more likely to continue shocking such a person than say one that was aggressive and vindictive. In this light, McDonough's limited acting skills were an insignificant problem—he could "train" and rehearsals would only build confidence.[73] Moreover, since most of the learner's role was to be prerecorded, McDonough would have little direct interaction with participants.

The hiring of Williams as the experimenter also had more to do with his personal characteristics than his acting ability. Participants were surely more likely to comply with instructions from a "stern, intellectual looking man" who performed his "role in a cold, austere manner," rather than, say, a more carefree person with no semblance of intellectual authority.[74] Thus, the decision to hire these two men provided yet more strain resolving and binding forces to Milgram's carefully constructed basic experimental procedure.

After introducing many ad hoc trial-and-error innovations and refinements, on 7 August 1961, Milgram finally felt confident enough to embark on the official research program—the all-important baseline experiment, termed the Remote condition. The Remote (baseline) condition generated a 65% completion rate. Milgram was probably expecting a slightly higher rate of completion, considering the only subtle changes (infrequent wall-banging) he made to the Truly Remote Pilot, which "virtually all" participants had completed. Nonetheless, this still surprisingly high first official baseline experiment provided Milgram with the counterintuitive results he desired.

Armed with this data, Milgram soon submitted his first article on the obedience research program for publication, titled "Behavioral Study of Obedience" (December 1961). In the second paragraph, he mentions the Holocaust, hinting at a connection between this historical event and his research, "Obedience, as a determinant of behavior, is of particular relevance to our time. It has been reliably established that from 1933 to 45, millions of innocent persons were systematically slaughtered on command."[75] The article then goes on to present a procedural overview of the Remote condition, and the completion rate obtained. It concludes with a presentation of several factors—Yale's institutional power, the experiment's apparently worthy scientific purpose, obligation pressures, etc.—that Milgram believed might explain the result.[76] Milgram also offers a tantalizing footnote indicating that the results from many other variations on this baseline experiment were forthcoming. Though, according to Miller, Collins, and Brief, the article raised "extraordinarily vital and sobering questions,"[77] in the absence of any concise theory, it provided no concrete answers. As a result, reviewers twice recommended its rejection, with one of them, Edward E. Jones, arguing the Remote condition was, at best, a "triumph of social engineering."[78] Despite

this setback, and after some amendments, the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* published the piece in October of 1963. The Remote experiment's high completion rate quickly caught the attention of scholars and the popular press. It became Milgram's "best-known result"[79] and thus had its intended effect.

Conclusion

How did Milgram rapidly transform a large proportion of ordinary people into willing torturers of other human beings? Several key factors likely contributed to the achievement of Milgram's initial goal of obtaining a high baseline completion rate. First, he drew on his previous experience as an observer of Nazi war crime trials and as a student of psychology, both of which aided in his introduction of a variety of strain resolving and binding innovations to his basic procedure. Second, he relied upon his acute intuition to incorporate strain resolving or binding innovations that he suspected were likely to lock the participant into inflicting every shock. A third factor contributing to the Remote condition's high completion rate was Milgram's adoption during the pilot studies of the exploratory method of discovery. Exploration is a trial-and-error approach to discovery where observations made during the research journey serve as the creative source of new and even better ideas. The exploratory approach enabled Milgram to discover and then introduce some powerful strain resolving mechanisms and binding factors, ideas beyond the realms of his own experiences and intuitive feel of what might bring about his preconceived goal. These three factors led to the gradual accumulation, refinement, and incorporation of a variety of strain resolving mechanisms and binding factors that together increased the probability of any one participant completing the basic experimental procedure.

During the pilot studies, Milgram ended up introducing so many powerful strain resolving and binding forces that by the final Truly Remote Pilot, "virtually all" participants completed the basic procedure. Therefore, just before the first official "Remote" baseline experiment, Milgram was already within striking distance of realizing his initial goal of maximizing the completion rate. But because he required a scale to measure obedient tendencies, he realized he needed to introduce a

source of strain—auditory stimulation—that he was confident would increase slightly participants' resistance to the experimenter's commands. So, during his pilot-study journey, Milgram also learned how to limit the completion rate, thus exhibiting substantial control over the first official experiment's likely completion rate. And, as Milgram gained greater and greater control, he discovered that "moral factors can be shunted aside with relative ease by a calculated restructuring of the informational and social field."[80] Thus, Milgram's tinkering with strain resolving and binding forces until he got the kind of results he desired suggests that reviewer Edward E. Jones was probably right: the Obedience baseline was—first and foremost—a feat of social engineering.

Having achieved his initial unofficial goal of discovering how to ensure a large proportion of ordinary people would ostensibly inflict harm on another human, Milgram was in a position to address the crux of his research program: his second and more explicit official goal to unravel *why* so many baseline participants were willing to torture (perhaps even kill) an innocent human being.

NOTES

1. The terms *past experience* and *intuition*, as used here, are not necessarily mutually exclusive categories. If, however, at any point I focus on intuition, it is because Milgram appears to have arrived at a particular innovation independent of his past experiences.
2. Harré and Secord (1972, p. 69).
3. Blass (2004, p. 65).
4. SMP, Box 46, Folder 165.
5. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 150).
6. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 150).
7. Milgram (1974, p. 153).
8. Milgram (1974, pp. 153–164).
9. Milgram (1974, p. 157).
10. See, for example, Schachter (1959).
11. Milgram (1974, p. 14).
12. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 150).
13. Milgram (1974, p. 176).
14. Adams and Belfour (1998, p. xx).
15. SMP, Box 43, Folder 126.
16. SMP, Box 46, Folder 165.

17. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 152).
18. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 152).
19. Quoted in Russell (2011, pp. 152–153).
20. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 153).
21. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 153).
22. SMP, Box 43, Folder 126.
23. Milgram (1974, p. 26).
24. Milgram (1974, p. 26).
25. Blass (2004, pp. 67–68).
26. SMP, Box 46, Folder 163.
27. Quoted in Blass (2004, p. 68).
28. Milgram (1964, p. 11).
29. Quoted in Blass (2004, p. 68).
30. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 154).
31. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 154).
32. Milgram (1973, p. 64).
33. Quoted in Blass (2004, p. 68).
34. Quoted in Perry (2012, p. 57).
35. Russell (2011, p. 155).
36. Quoted in Meyer (1970, p. 128).
37. Quoted in Meyer (1970, p. 128).
38. SMP, Box 45, Folder 160.
39. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 155).
40. Elms (1995, p. 24).
41. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 156).
42. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 156).
43. Milgram (1974, p. 74).
44. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 156).
45. SMP, Box 45, Folder 160.
46. SMP, Box 45, Folder 160.
47. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 156).
48. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 156).
49. SMP, Box 45, Folder 160.
50. Milgram (1974, p. 41). See also Kaufmann (1967, pp. 321–322), Strudler and Warren (2001, p. 157), and Wilson (1993, pp. 1–54).
51. Milgram said in April 1968, "Disobedience in this situation requires nothing more than activation of the most basic moral values in each individual" (SMP, Box 46, Folder 168).
52. Blass (2004, p. 70).
53. Perry (2012, p. 91).
54. SMP, Box 46, Folder 163.

55. SMP, Box 43, Folder 127.
56. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 157).
57. SMP, Box 43, Folder 127.
58. SMP, Box 43, Folder 127.
59. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 157).
60. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 158).
61. Gilbert (1981, p. 692).
62. Freedman and Fraser (1966).
63. Dolinski and Grzyb (2016, p. 277).
64. Blass (2004, p. 75).
65. SMP, Box 46, Folder 163.
66. Blass (2004, p. 75).
67. Milgram (1965, p. 61).
68. Milgram (1965, p. 61).
69. Nicholson (2011, p. 255).
70. Mixon has suggested that McDonough "was not a very good actor" and that his screams "are neither convincing nor moving" (1989, pp. 37–38). It is true that, as Milgram (1974, p. 173) himself conceded, a small proportion of participants were unconvinced by the deception. But compared with the few who suspected that McDonough and his screams were fake, as documents and audiotapes at the Milgram archive illustrate, many more remained unsure. "Little doubt in my mind…whether my legs were being pulled, I was pretty sure they were but I wasn't sure" (SMP, Box 153, #2301). Also, many participants conceded to having been fooled. "You're quite an actor, maybe you'll get the Oscar" (SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2327). Afterward, some participants remained skeptical that the learner did not receive any harsh shocks. "Since I'm not convinced that the learner in the experiment was acting, I am holding off any comments until I have positive proof that it was rigged" (SMP, Box 44, Divider "NO LABEL," #0820).
71. SMP, Box 43, Folder 127.
72. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 159).
73. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 160).
74. Quoted in Russell (2011, p. 160).
75. Milgram (1963, p. 371).
76. Milgram (1963, p. 377).
77. Miller et al. (1995, p. 4).
78. Quoted in Parker (2000, p. 112).
79. Miller (1986, p. 9).
80. Milgram (1974, p. 7).

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The Obedience to Authority Variations and Milgram's Agentic State Theory

After discovering *how* to get most ordinary people to inflict harm on a likable person, Milgram moved on to his second goal of explaining *why* 65% of participants completed the Remote (baseline) experiment. To achieve this second goal, Milgram converted any emerging questions into a variety of slight variations of the baseline procedure in the belief that by running these tests and noting the degree of (dis)obedience obtained, new questions, insights and, most importantly, potential explanations would emerge. He assumed that achieving this goal would lead him toward a theory of obedience to authority.

Over a ten-month period, Milgram tested just over a score of variations, which saw him manipulate a diverse range of variables. In this chapter, I present Milgram's discoveries during this long and convoluted stage of the project. I also draw some connections between the Obedience studies and Max Weber's theory of formal rationality in order to explain Milgram's impressive organizational feat in collecting what ended up being an enormous amount of data. The final section of the chapter presents the theory Milgram developed from these tests and how he applied it to better understanding perpetrator behavior during the Holocaust.

Variations on the Remote Baseline

The pilot studies drew Milgram's attention to the effect of physical distance on the completion rate. Condition 1: Remote, the official baseline experiment, was actually the first of a set of experiments

termed the Proximity Series. The more proximate variations on Condition 1: Remote included Condition 2: Voice-Feedback (the participant could hear all the learners' verbal reactions to being shocked), and Condition 3: Proximity (participant and learner were in the same room). In short, the increased proximity between the participant and learner reduced the completion rate (65, 62.5, and 40%, respectively). While these results may have confirmed Milgram's expectations, he remained surprised that 40% of participants still inflicted every shock on a learner located only an arm's length away. This result led Milgram to devise an additional and even more disturbing variation, Condition 4: Touch-Proximity.

The Touch-Proximity experiment mirrored the Proximity condition until the infliction of the 150-volt shock, after which the learner would refuse to put his hand on the shock plate. The experimenter would then instruct the participant to force the learner's hand onto the shock plate and hold it there (plastic insulation "protected" participants from the "shocks").[1] Milgram said before undertaking this variation, "I seriously doubt that many subjects will go allong [*sic*] with the command for very long."[2] But again Milgram was wrong. Even though the learner "was screaming his guts out," and the participant "had to physically struggle with him in order to get his hand down on the shock generator," 30% of participants still completed this particularly disturbing variation.[3] As the Touch-Proximity condition neared completion, Milgram wrote in a letter dated 21 September 1961 addressed to Henry Riecken of the National Science Foundation:

> I once wondered whether in all of the United States a vicious government could find enough moral imbeciles to meet the personnel requirements of a national system of death camps, of the sort that were maintained in Germany. I am now beginning to think that the full complement could be recruited in New Haven.[4]

The Touch-Proximity condition further broadened Milgram's parameters of the so-called blind obedience to authority. After running this particular variation, Milgram become confident that he could start over and run a New Baseline experiment that included even more disconcerting (impressive?) modifications that would probably still generate a fairly high completion rate. After finishing the Proximity Series, Milgram lost access to his laboratory facilities and the Obedience research program was transferred to a basement laboratory in the same building.

This reallocation of lab space seems to have provided Milgram with the impetus to substitute his intended baseline study (Condition 1: Remote) with a new and much more disturbing one.[5]

Condition 5: New Baseline resembled Condition 2: Voice-Feedback but included the following strain-inducing innovations. First, while being hooked up to the shock plate, the learner (in the presence of the participant) would casually point out, "When I was at the Westhaven V.A. Hospital, a few years ago, they detected a slight heart condition. Nothing serious, but are these shocks dangerous?"[6] The experimenter would then explain, somewhat curtly, that although the shocks may be painful, they caused no permanent tissue damage. Second, in the standardized tape recordings, the learner made explicit references to his medical condition at the 150, 195, and 330-volt switches, with minor variations on "My heart's bothering me."[7] Third, the learner's verbal articulation of agony would suddenly stop at the 345-volt switch (unlike Conditions 2–4 where the learner refused to answer any more questions and, upon receiving further shocks, continued yelping in pain).[8] Silence gave the participant the disturbing impression that the learner had, at least, been rendered unconscious. In the new laboratory, the New Baseline (or 'Cardiac') condition also generated a 65% completion rate, and thereafter became the standard procedure for all subsequent variations.[9]

On completing the first five experiments, Milgram found himself in a position he could never have envisioned prior to the first pilot study. He had come to the counterintuitive realization that obtaining a high completion rate was actually the easy part. What was difficult was inventing a variation on the New Baseline experiment that produced a low completion rate. Around this point in time he began to wonder, "What is the limit of such obedience?"[10]

Milgram's next goal was to run a score of variations on the New Baseline experiment that varied the factors he suspected would alter this experiment's 65% completion rate. The enormous logistical difficulty of achieving this goal should not be underestimated. Because each variation typically involved either 20 or 40 participants, Elms had to recruit, then ensure, a constant flow of nearly one thousand participants. With the tests divided into one-hour blocks, each of these participants had to arrive exactly on time so that Milgram's actors could quickly 'process' them through the experimental procedure. Processing involved training participants, running the experiment, collecting data, and debriefing. Much like working on an assembly-line, Milgram's team had to complete

all of these tasks within a predetermined time so that the stage, so to speak, could be reset before the next participant's arrival at the top of the hour. It is of little surprise, then, that according to Perry, during the second to last experiment's debriefing sessions, participants "didn't get much more than a minute and a half and a handshake before they were shown the door."[11]

As if this organizational feat were not enough, after processing 20 or 40 participants Milgram's actors had to learn, and then run, a new variation on the baseline procedure. Because Milgram's research team consisted of a group of part-timers, they had to achieve all this around their full-time jobs (they worked almost non-stop from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. on weeknights and from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. on weekends). Milgram's planning was so meticulous that he even predicted months in advance when data collection was likely to end. In a letter to the university police dated 17 October 1961, he noted that the experiments would "continue until the end of the Spring term, 1962."[12] From the start, Milgram had set up an unrelenting data collection schedule accompanied by a specific completion deadline that left little room for error. That his data collection schedule was successful shows an organizational feat of prodigious dimensions.

The "industrial scale"[13] of the Obedience studies arguably eclipsed in size and breadth many of its predecessors in social psychology. As Perry observes, "[t]he amount of information is overwhelming."[14] Even contemporary scholars would not contemplate collecting so much data without the aid of computers and the convenience offered by automated data collection software. In terms of scale and ambition, Milgram attempted to take data collection in social psychology to a new level. When viewed from an organizational perspective, his "grand scale research"—larger, faster, greater, and more efficient than anything before reflects Max Weber's concept of formal rationality. And as I will argue throughout the remainder of this book, it is formal rationality that provides the most important linkage connecting the Obedience experiments to the Holocaust.

Formal Rationality

Formal rationality refers to the search for the optimal means to a given end, whether that end is building a house, designing a bus timetable, or getting from point "A" to point "B" as efficiently as possible. Formal rationality is strategically the single best way to goal achievement.

Particularly since the advent of the Industrial Revolution, what is generally considered the one best way to goal achievement has undergone a series of incremental improvements—the discovery of new and even more optimal means to particular ends. Finding the optimal means to a given end typically requires the deployment of an organizational strategy. Building on Max Weber's legacy, George Ritzer argues there are four main components to an organizational strategy: efficiency, predictability, control, and calculability. Efficiency is the pursuit of a shorter or faster route—an optimal means to the desired end. Predictability is the application of standardization—a movement toward all variables operating in a foreseeable way, which increases the ability to plan and replicate future desirable outcomes or results. Control involves greater manipulative command over all factors and the elimination of as many uncertainties as possible, which enables greater predictability (particularly as less predictable human labor is replaced by more controllable, predictable, and efficient nonhuman technologies). Finally, calculability involves the quantification of as many factors within an organizational process as possible. Advances in calculability increase the possibility of measurement, which extends control over more variables, and in turn, increases the predictability of future outcomes. The greater the degree of formal rationality (efficiency, predictability, control, and calculability), the more likely people are to achieve their goals, whatever they might be, and thus profit economically, politically, socially, or culturally. The attraction of obtaining such benefits ensures a never-ending number of people seeking to aggressively extend the reach of the four main components of formally rationalized approaches to goal achievement.[15]

The rapid extension of formal rationality across the modern era is perhaps best illustrated in the advent of Taylorism, Fordism, and McDonaldization.[16] Frederick W. Taylor (1856–1915), one of the first management consultants, was struck by inefficiencies in the early twentieth-century workplace. Through his time and motion studies, he sought to discover, then introduce the most efficient performance strategies. For example, he observed workers manually moving pig iron, and began sorting the most efficient from the least efficient workers while paying close attention to what it was that distinguished them. Taylor broke down the workers' body motions into their step-by-step components, which enabled him to identify, then eliminate any extraneous movements. The end result was the discovery of a much more efficient means to the most productive end.[17] Taylor's use of this technique, termed Taylorism,

saw the daily average for moving pig iron increase from 12.5 tons to 47 tons per worker—over a 300% increase in efficiency in exchange for only a 60% wage increase.[18] Taylorism had a profound effect on the twentieth-century workplace.

Henry Ford (1863–1947), the American industrialist and founder of Ford motors, initiated an extension in the formal rationalization of the production process in a number of ways. After observing the Chicago meat processing plant's disassembly line,[19] Ford built on Taylorism by inventing what is now termed the assembly-line process. Instead of skilled tradespersons laboriously building then attaching car parts to a stationary vehicle frame, in Ford's factory a long line of vehicle frames moved along a conveyor belt past unskilled car assemblers. As the frames moved past the unskilled workers, each sequentially performed his particular and simple task until a constant flow of fully assembled vehicles emerged at the end of the moving line. Ford's dynamic assembly line caused production efficiency to increase enormously. But as Ritzer notes, the assembly line process also led to advances in the other components of a rationalized system: "What each worker on the line does, such as putting a hubcap on…is highly *predictable* and leads to identical end products. The assembly line permits the quantification of many elements of the production process," thus leading to greater *calculability*.[20] Perhaps most importantly, if one worker failed to perform their particular task at the speed required, workers thereafter would be unable to perform their tasks. A bottleneck in the system would form and, to the frustration of both management and co-workers, there would be a delay or even a failure in overall task completion. Consequently, the set speed of the moving line could subtly push all assemblers into working much faster than they would probably do of their own accord. The assembly line was, therefore, an early yet effective example of nonhuman technology capable of imposing high levels of *control* over an entire workforce—all felt pushed by an unsympathetic machine into keeping up.[21] Furthermore, because the workers' tasks were purposefully simple, advances in nonhuman technology rendered their labor susceptible to elimination. For example, toward the end of the twentieth century, the automation of the car industry took Fordism to all new heights by substituting (where possible) human labor with computer-guided, high-tech robots. These robots could be mathematically programmed (calculability) to perform the same simplistic tasks without variation (predictability), with no complaints or risk of labor disputes (control), and at much higher speeds for

24 hours a day, 365 days per year (efficiency). As the history of motor vehicle production illustrates,

> Organizations have historically gained control over employees…gradually, through increasingly effective technologies. Eventually, they began reducing workers' behavior to a series of machinelike actions. And once employees were behaving like machines, they could be replaced with actual machines. The replacement of humans by machines is the ultimate stage in control over people…[22]

Implied in the above examples is that the greatest threat to a desirable end (like predictably high profits) is the means of human labor. For managerial social engineers, humans are notoriously unpredictable, largely because unlike nonhuman technology, they are difficult to control.[23]

Another major advance in formal rationality came with what Ritzer terms the McDonaldization of society.[24] In 1961, entrepreneur Ray Kroc bought the small, yet already efficient and profitable, Californian hamburger chain McDonald's from Richard and Maurice McDonald. Kroc believed he could make McDonald's far more profitable by achieving huge advances across all four components of an organizational system, particularly (but not only) *increased managerial control* over his largely indispensable yet unpredictable human workforce. The successful execution of Kroc's plan necessitated first and foremost that the entire McDonald's workforce did *exactly* as he demanded. So how did Kroc, in the role of social engineer, increase efficiency, predictability, calculability, and especially control?

Part of Kroc's formula for making McDonald's more profitable was to persuade customers to pay the highest possible price for the smallest possible quantity of low-quality food. His means to this end was to, first off, promote the illusion of quantity and quality. Thus, despite the Big Mac's name and carefully crafted, size-enhanced image, MacDonald's most famous hamburger is not all that big. Also, the unusual packaging of McDonald's fries—vertically stacked thin sticks of potato into a small base—misleadingly promotes the impression of quantity. Successfully achieving the illusion of quantity arguably distracted customers from engaging in any discussions over food quality, which being pre-frozen, full of preservatives, and high in trans fats, was low.[25]

Furthermore, despite their slogan, "We do it all for you," the McDonald's system creatively increased efficiency and control by putting

customers to work.[26] They had to form lines to order their meals, and either left the premises entirely with their food or transferred it to an available restaurant table. At the table, customers sat on purposefully uncomfortable chairs that ensured that after eating their meal, they did not loiter.[27] But before vacating the restaurant, they were subtly encouraged to clear their own tables and deposit any rubbish into adjacent bins, a process that ensured table availability for subsequent customers.[28] According to Ritzer, "People are moved along in this system not by a conveyor belt, but by the unwritten, but universally known, norms for eating in a fast-food restaurant."[29] Because the customer actually "does it for McDonald's," the need for waitstaff was eliminated.

Management's decision on what menu items became permanent features was frequently based on product simplicity: bun, meat patty, and garnish. As franchises increased in number, these food components could be prepared off-site at centralized production and distribution plants.[30] Simple menu items and the production of off-site food components eliminated the need for an onsite chef and kitchen staff. These skilled employees were replaced with an assembly line of unskilled workers who need only heat then quickly assemble the food components. For several reasons, the elimination of chefs and their staff led to advances across all four components of a formally rationalized system. First, substituting a skilled with an unskilled workforce increased financial efficiency. Second, because chefs, in particular, have far greater expertise than McDonald's restaurant management on all matters relating to food—especially in terms of the highest quality (typically expensive) ingredients—they are likely to feel justified in challenging (even resisting) managerial control. Consequently, substituting them with an army of (preferably) docile teenagers greatly increased managerial control. And finally, because individual chefs were, in Kroc's words, "temperamental" and "never consistent,"[31] their elimination ensured the standardization of all menu items across time and space, which in turn increased both calculability and especially predictability. The culmination of all the above changes resulted in, paradoxically, a restaurant without any waitstaff or chefs.

For Kroc, product standardization was a very important achievement because it meant that all menu items had the unique potential to look and taste the same the world over. McDonald's successful business model could, therefore, be franchised on a grand, even global, scale. McDonald's franchises were attractive to potential business owners

because Kroc demanded only a low $950 franchise fee plus 1.9% of their predictably high profits.[32] Kroc's only major stipulation was that, although franchisees could, from the bottom-up, supply him with ideas for new menu items,[33] they had to follow from the top-down his business model with absolute, undeviating exactitude. This cunning stipulation ensured that some of Kroc's many franchisees indeed supplied him with new product ideas (one being the extremely profitable McMuffin), yet whenever he gave orders, *throughout the world* all McDonald's restaurants reacted. So, rather ingeniously Kroc's business model achieved a masterful balance between creative flexibility and rigid centralized control.[34]

Nevertheless, Kroc's highly controlling managerial system left his business open to infiltration by a rather ingenious hoax. From the mid-1990s until 2004, a male claiming to be a police officer rang at least 70 fast-food restaurants and attempted to convince management to strip-search young female employees on the basis of accusations of an apparent act of theft. One particular phone call at a McDonald's restaurant saw a strip search escalate into a sexual assault,[35] an event that inspired the 2012 movie *Compliance*. The hoax was probably so effective in gaining restaurant management compliance because the supposed officer inserted himself at the top of the fast-food restaurant's management hierarchy, which all subordinate staff had been trained to never question. The hoax has an important Obedience-study connection: Blass believes it to be the closest example of Milgram's experiments carried out in a real-life setting.[36] That, as we shall come to understand, was no coincidence.

The hoax reveals a major problem with formal rationality. Although rationalization generates enormous advantages—consumer convenience, product standardization (getting exactly what one wants each time), greater profits for business—it also tends to result in significant yet unanticipated negative side effects: the so-called irrationality of rationality. These typically include, among others, customers being put to work, product and service homogenization, predictable outcomes generating general feelings of disenchantment, declining health, environmental hazards, and the dehumanization of both those served by and working within such systems.[37]

Obviously, the McDonaldization thesis is not just about Kroc and his innovative feats of large-scale social engineering. Alluding to Taylorism and Fordism, Ritzer notes, "*McDonald's and McDonaldization, then, do not represent something new, but rather the culmination of a series of*

rationalization processes that had been occurring throughout the twentieth century" (italics original).[38] The constant pursuit of greater efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control have and will continue to extend their reach until society becomes, as Weber suggested long ago, a seamless web of rationalized institutions. Other businesses that have adopted McDonaldization include Burger King, Seven Eleven, Weight Watchers, Starbucks, and healthcare providers, educational institutions, and even national parks where ironically people often go to escape the suffocation of formal rationality.[39]

Weber's model of a formally rationalized system was bureaucracy. The bureaucratic process (like Taylorism, Fordism, and McDonalidization) is an organizational strategy purposefully designed to implement the 'one best way' to goal achievement. The organizational goal is broken down into a variety of discrete tasks, the achievement of which is allocated to different functionary units or bureaucrats. Using a predetermined sequence, each bureaucrat performs a specialist task following different rules and regulations, and the next bureaucrat performs their specialist task until the goal is achieved.[40] The specific rules and regulations that each bureaucrat follows are determined by what "past history" has shown to be the "one best way" to goal achievement.[41] That is, as bureaucrats perform a particular task, increasing time, and observational experience leads management to an incremental discovery of an even better "one best way"—thus generating new and more efficient rules and regulations to bring about goal achievement.[42] Weber's characteristics of bureaucracy as an ideal type (an analytical construct that, in its 'purest' form, is nowhere found in the real world)[43] include: the specialization of labor, a well-defined hierarchy of authority, clearly defined responsibilities, a system of rules and procedures, impersonality of relations, promotion based on the technical qualifications, the centralization of authority, and written records.[44] According to Ritzer,

> Weber praised…bureaucracy…for its many advantages over other mechanisms that help people discover and implement optimum means to ends. The most important advantages are the four basic dimensions of rationalization […] First, Weber viewed the bureaucracy as the most *efficient* structure for handling large numbers of tasks requiring a great deal of paperwork. […] Second, bureaucracies emphasize *calculability*, or the quantification of as many things as possible […] Third, because of their well-entrenched rules and regulations, bureaucracies also operate in a

highly *predictable* manner […] Finally, bureaucracies emphasize *control over people through the replacement of human with nonhuman technology.* […] [N]onhuman technologies (machines and rules, for example) tend to control people […] Indeed, the bureaucracy itself may be seen as one huge nonhuman technology. Its nearly automatic functioning may be seen as an effort to replace human judgment with the dictates of rules, regulations, and structures. Employees are controlled by the division of labor […] Furthermore, by making few, if any, judgments, people begin to resemble human robots or computers. (Italics added)[45]

As inherently bureaucratic organizational strategies spread—as Taylorism, Fordism and McDonaldization illustrate—there has and will continue to be a push to substitute human judgment with policy to the point where rules and regulations are introduced in an attempt to control and ultimately determine human action. Bureaucratic rules and regulations aim to control the actions of the bureaucrat by implying the elimination of human choice—their humanity and agency are pushed into deferring to the dictates of the (potentially unethical) system. With bureaucracy's attempt to circumscribe human choice, functionaries are instead encouraged to just follow the rules and regulations, and then pass their work on to the next office.[46] It is important to note, however, that bureaucracy as a tool of social engineering does not determine human choice or eliminate the human agency. Bureaucrats still end up making choices. As Raul Hilberg puts it:

You have all heard the saying that a bureaucrat is merely a cog in the wheel—it turns whenever the wheel is turning. As a political scientist, I have a different view: The bureaucrat drives the wheel—without him, it would not turn.[47]

Formal Rationality and the Obedience Studies

Even before the pilot studies, Milgram had, as mentioned, a preconceived (unofficial) goal to maximize the completion rate in the first official baseline experiment. His means to achieving this end involved three formally rational techniques of discovery: drawing on past experiences, an intuitive feel for what might work, and the trial-and-error exploratory process of discovery. Moreover, with the aim of imposing greater control over participants' actions and therefore gaining greater predictability, he also incorporated more and more nonhuman technology into the basic

procedure. For example, the standardized and more precise shock generator and high-tech measurement devices, including a statistical analysis calculating machine and "a 20-pen Esterline Angus Event Recorder that registered the duration and latency of each "shock" administration to the nearest hundredth of a second."[48] There was also, of course, the nonhuman technologies of Milgram's carefully designed participant schedule and assembly line process—accompanied by the application of his most effective rules and regulations—introduced so his staff could systematically extract data from the hundreds of people "processed" through the Obedience-study program. Milgram's rational techniques of discovery and insertion of a variety of nonhuman technologies not only helped the young social psychologist navigate (efficiency) in a more precise (calculable) direction toward the results he needed for goal achievement (control) but they also signaled when (predictability) he would be ready to run the first official experiment. In these ways, Milgram discovered over time and through increasing observational experience—that is *past history*—the "one best way" of achieving his preconceived end. Thus, Milgram's research journey to his first official experiment was perhaps less a scientifically rigorous study and more a Weberian exercise in means-to-end formal rationality.

Unlike with other scientific methodologies such as hypothesis testing that inefficiently deploy less calculable, controllable, and predictable approaches to collecting data, Milgram, even before he ran his first official experiment, knew with a great deal of confidence what kind of results he would obtain. His approach to the first baseline might not have been, in the traditional sense, very scientific,[49] but it clearly represents an advance in formal rationality within the social science laboratory.[50] To be clear, I am not suggesting that Milgram fraudulently invented his results in the same way as disgraced researchers like Diederik Stapel and Marc Hauser. He did not. Rather, I am arguing that Milgram designed and then repeatedly tested an inchoate procedure, which, over time, provided him with a level of insight that enabled him to predict how most participants in the first official experiment were likely to behave. It was in this way that Milgram fulfilled the role of a social engineer who constructed a manipulative social environment purposefully designed to procure the behaviors likely to match his preconceived desires. And, the same—as we shall see later—could also describe what the most "successful" goal-directed functionaries in the Nazi regime did during the Holocaust.

Milgram's Results

Having socially engineered his initial goal, Milgram's subsequent variations on the New Baseline experiment more closely resembled traditional scientific data collection methods. Without pilot studies, he had less control over the results. Even so, his experiments—which included 22 variations involving a total of 780 participants,[51] each processed in one-hour blocks across a ten-month period—was an impressive and possibly hitherto unparalleled organizational feat in social psychology. He ran his experiments with such organizational and bureaucratic precision that data collection came to an end on 27 May 1962, exactly as he had predicted back in October 1961. Elms was not exaggerating when he said, "even at that early state in his career," Milgram "was already the most well-organized researcher I have ever encountered."[52] Table 5.1 provides a brief overview of Conditions 5 through 24.

The data collected illustrates a number of things. First, Conditions 1 to 4—the Proximity Series—confirmed that moving the learner closer to the teacher powerfully decreased the completion rate from 65 to 62.5 to 40 to a low of 30%. Second, moving the experimenter away from the learner also decreased the completion rate (see Conditions 18a, 22a, and 17b, and, to a lesser extent, Conditions 17a and 19). Finally, comparing the completion rate of the Relationship condition with the New Baseline (15 versus 65%) shows a personal relationship between the teacher and the learner could curb the completion rate. In fact, several comments from participants in the Relationship condition confirm Milgram's suspicion that a relationship between the learner and the participant would powerfully undercut the experimenter's influence. For example, in one participant's post-experimental debriefing, Williams, the experimenter, pointing probably to the 165-volt shock switch, stated, "This is about where everybody stops right here…in this condition with friends." Milgram then added, "It makes quite a difference see."[53] During another Relationship condition debriefing, Milgram asked a participant, "did he [the experimenter] tell you about the strangers…?" Teacher: "Yeah." Milgram: "And in that situation a lot of people will go right up till the end 'cause they don't know the person and they don't give a damn […] he can be screaming his ahh bloody head off."[54] Milgram briefly mentioned the Relationship condition in his 1965 article *Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority*,[55] which he originally wrote in

Table 5.1 Milgram's New Baseline experiment and variations (I thank Augustine Brannigan for helping clarify the end results of several of these experiments)

Condition and name	Description	Completion rate (%)	Number of participants
5: New Baseline	See this chapter	65	40
6: Change of personnel	The usual acting team of the forceful experimenter and passive learner were replaced with a "soft" experimenter and "hard looking" learner	50	40
7: Groups for disobedience	In this variation there were three teachers (one shock-inflicting participant and two actors performing subsidiary tasks). At 150 volts one actor refused to continue (then at 210 volts the second actor refused to continue). The experimenter urged the participant to continue despite the recalcitrance of the two actor-teachers	10	40
8: Enters with prior conditions	Before starting this condition, the learner stipulated that he would only participate if the experiment was stopped on his command. The experimenter (in the participant's presence) agreed, but when the learner received a 150-volt shock and demanded the experiment be stopped, the experimenter broke the verbal contract by telling the participant to continue inflicting further and more intense shocks	40	40
9: Groups for obedience	In this variation there were three teachers (one shock-inflicting participant and two actors performing subsidiary tasks). If the participant expressed disapproval in regards to inflicting shocks, both actors would support the experimenter's commands that the participant continue inflicting more shocks for incorrect answers	72.5	40
10a: Learner demands to be shocked	In this condition the experimenter told the participant to stop inflicting shocks at 150 volts, but the pained learner demanded that the participant inflict further shocks, because he (the learner) wanted to endure more shocks than his friend who had been a learner in an earlier trial	0	20

Table 5.1   (continued)

Condition and name	Description	Completion rate (%)	Number of participants
10b: Experimenter leaves the room	If the participant in Condition 10a refused to shock the learner, the experimenter would leave the laboratory on a pretense. Then the learner would again implore the participant to continue inflicting more intensifying shocks. Thirteen participants refused to follow the learner's request, but seven agree to inflict further shocks. Only two participants went to the end of the shock board and completed the experiment	10	20
11: Group pressure and action against a person	In this variation there were three teachers (one shock-inflicting participant and two actors performing subsidiary tasks). The experimenter informed the teachers that for each incorrect answer received, the three teachers were to individually choose the voltage intensity of punishment to be inflicted. The choice lowest in voltage was then inflicted. However, for each incorrect answer the two actors increased the intensity of their choice of punishment by 15 volts	17.5	40
12: Authority as victim	Before starting this variation the learner informed the experimenter (in the presence of the participant) that he would only agree to be in the experiment if he could see the effect of the shocks on another person. The experimenter therefore agreed to be the learner, but after receiving a 150-volt shock the experimenter demanded that the participant stop inflicting further shocks. The observing learner then instructed the participant to ignore the experimenter and continue inflicting more intensifying shocks	0	20
13: Peer administers shocks	In this variation the actor was the shock inflictor and the actual participant performed a subsidiary task. Will the participant refuse to fulfill their subsidiary but necessary task (thus impeding the shock-inflicting actor's ability to inflict further shocks), or, will he continue to fulfill his indirect role in the infliction of punishment?	92.5	40

Table 5.1   (continued)

Condition and name	Description	Completion rate (%)	Number of participants
14: Subject chooses shock level	The participant was instructed in this condition that he was to choose the intensity of shock to be inflicted for incorrect answers (the experimenter gave no commands)	2.5	40
15a: Two authorities—contradictory commands	In this variation, after the 150-volt switch, one "good" experimenter commanded the participant to stop inflicting further shocks and another "bad" experimenter commanded the participant to continue inflicting more intensifying shocks	0	20
15b: Good experimenter/bad experimenter	If the participant in Condition 15a sided with the "good" experimenter and refused to continue, the "good" experimenter would then leave the laboratory. The "bad" experimenter would thereafter demand the participant continue to inflict more intensifying shocks	20	20
16: Two authorities, one as victim	In this condition, the person meant to be the learner apparently failed to show up for his appointment to be in the experiment, so one of the two experimenters decided to fulfill the learner role. After the 150-volt switch, the learner (experimenter) demanded the experiment be stopped, but the other experimenter demanded the participant continue to inflict more intensifying shocks	65	20
17a: Teacher in charge	There were two teachers in this variation (one was an actor). Before starting, the experimenter had to leave the laboratory but told the actor-teacher to choose a punishment regime, which the other teacher (participant) was to implement. At some point—perhaps before or after the experimenter left the laboratory (this is unclear)—the actor-teacher decided to increase the punishment by 15 volts for every incorrect answer received	55	20
17b: Teacher in charge (experimenter returns)	If the teacher (participant) in Condition 17a refused to implement the actor-teacher's punishment regime, the experimenter returned and then commanded the teacher (participant) to do so	42.9	7 (see SMP, Box 46, Folder 163)

Table 5.1 (continued)

Condition and name	Description	Completion rate (%)	Number of participants
18a: Experimenter Absent	In this variation the experimenter gave the usual instructions, but suddenly had to leave the laboratory. Before leaving, the experimenter told the participant to complete the experiment on his own. The participant was given the experimenter's contact telephone number. But if, in concern for the learner, the participant rang the experimenter, the experimenter would then urge the participant to continue inflicting more intensifying shocks	22.5	40
18b: Experimenter returns	If the participant in Condition 18a refused the distant experimenter's demands to inflict more intensifying shocks (or tried to deceive the experimenter by only inflicting light shocks), the experimenter would return to the laboratory and urge the participant to continue inflicting intensifying shocks (the outcome of this experiment is rather confusing and more archive research is required to determine what actually occurred)	?	?
19: No experimenter	In this condition the participant would arrive at the laboratory to find a note informing them that the experimenter was unable to attend. The note also informed the participant to press the 'play' button on a nearby cassette player. The cassette recording relayed the New Baseline instructions	37.5	40
20: Women	This condition was a replication of the New Baseline experiment except all participants were women	65	40
21: Educated opinion	Condition 21 was not an experimental variation but a survey of psychiatrists, college students, and middle class adults. These groups were presented with a basic overview of the experimental procedure (minus the actual results) and then asked to predict the expected behavior for both themselves and others as participants	N/A	N/A

(continued)

Table 5.1   (continued)

Condition and name	Description	Completion rate (%)	Number of participants
22a: Ordinary man gives orders	In this variation a shock-inflicting participant was teamed up with another teacher (an actor performing a subsidiary role). The experimenter suddenly had to leave the laboratory without informing the teachers of the punishment regime. In the experimenter's absence, the actor-teacher decided that the participant should increase the shock intensity by 15 volts for each incorrect answer	20	20
22b: Subject as bystander	This condition tested what the 16 of 20 participants who had refused to continue inflicting shocks in the above condition (22a: Ordinary Man Gives Orders) would do if the actor offered a compromise: the participant was asked to perform a subsidiary (yet necessary) task while the actor inflicted the shocks	68.75	16
23: Institutional context	This variation was a replication of the New Baseline experiment except that the experiment was run in a shabby office in Bridgeport (not Yale University) under the auspices of "Research Associates of Bridgeport"	47.5	40
24: Relationship	The participant was earlier told to bring to the laboratory someone who was at least an acquaintance. One of this pair became the teacher, the other the learner. Once the learner was strapped into the shock chair and the teacher and the experimenter left the learner's room, Milgram appeared and informed the learner that the experiment was actually trying to determine if their friend would obey commands to shock them. Then Milgram trained the learner how to react to the "intensifying shocks" (so that their reactions were similar to those of the usual learner)	15	20

1962.[56] But in this article he did not go into detail, adding only that this variation "will have to be described elsewhere, lest the present report be extended to monographic length."[57]

Although comparing the Relationship condition with the New Baseline experiment highlights the importance of knowing the learner, a closer look at the results from both experiments indicates that the relationship-versus-stranger distinction probably lies on a continuum. That is, when the learner was a blood or legal relative, no participants completed the experiment.[58] When the learner was an acquaintance or a friend, only 18% of participants completed the experiment,[59] and when the learner was a "likable" stranger—as in the New Baseline—65% of participants completed the experiment. Had Milgram run the Propaganda condition (where the learner's character was to be denigrated), it would have been possible to determine the difference in completion rates between two types of strangers—one repellent and one (as in the New Baseline) "likable." Evidence suggests that in such a condition Milgram was correct to assume that, "In all likelihood, our subjects would have experienced" less strain, and thus "greater ease in shocking the victim had he been portrayed as a brutal criminal or a pervert."[60] The results from the Relationship condition (unique in that every other variation involved a learner who was a stranger) indicate that the type and degree of relationship shared between the teacher and the learner— relative, friend, acquaintance, liked, disliked—was another important variable that could powerfully influence the completion rate.

Some of Milgram's variations enabled testing the veracity of participants' post-experimental justifications for completing. Some participants, for example, argued that the only reason they completed was because the experiment was conducted at Yale University, an elite learning institution that "gave them confidence in the integrity, competence, and benign purposes of the personnel."[61] These participants seemed to imply that if the experiments had been conducted at a far less distinguished institution, they would not have completed. To test the credibility of this justification, Milgram designed Condition 23: Institutional Context, which replicated the New Baseline procedure except it was conducted in a rather shabby office block located on the main street in the industrial town of Bridgeport, Connecticut. With no ties to Yale (or any other

recognizable organization), and under the auspices of a fictitious company, Research Associates of Bridgeport, this variation produced a 47.5% completion rate. Because this completion rate "was not significantly lower than that obtained at Yale," Milgram did not consider Yale's status to be a major variable behind the New Baseline's 65% completion rate.[62] In his view, participants who utilized this justification either did not know why they completed or did not know they were lying.

Milgram's many variations also tested the strength of emerging explanations for the New Baseline condition's high completion rate. For example, was the 65% completion rate due to the inherently more aggressive nature of males? In Condition 20: Women, however, 65% of female participants also completed the procedure. Perhaps, then the New Baseline completion rate was due to the inherently aggressive nature of human beings, both male and female. In Condition 14: Subject Chooses Shock Level, in which participants were free to inflict a shock of any intensity of their choosing, only 2.5% of participants inflicted every shock. In fact, so important was this result that Milgram regarded it as the New Baseline's experimental control. He had long held the assumption that obedience to authority in the form of a "command is the effective cause of…[the compliant participants'] action."[63] However, Milgram was aware that this assumption was unproved: participants might complete the standard procedure without orders. Under testing, only 2.5% of participants inflicted the most intense shocks without orders, with the remaining 97.5% of participants instead choosing to deliver low-intensity shocks when the experimenter left the decision of punishment intensity to them. Under orders, however, 65% of participants completed the experiment. This difference of 62.5% bolstered Milgram's presupposition that the determining factor was the authority figure's command.

As Milgram's certainty in this conclusion grew, however, the results of other variations eroded his confidence. Probably, the most salient of several possible examples is Condition 22a: Ordinary Man Gives Orders. Here the experimenter never approves the use of all shock levels and left the laboratory before the experiment started. Yet, in the total absence of orders from this authority figure, 20% of participants still followed the commands of a person of equal status to themselves and completed the experiment. Whatever had compelled, one-fifth of all participants to inflict every shock could not have had anything to do with obedience to a higher authority. The follow-up Condition 22b: Subject as Bystander tested what participants who refused to continue (16 of 20) would do

if offered a compromise—perform a subsidiary (yet necessary) task while the actor inflicted the shocks. Eleven of the sixteen initially uncooperative participants (68.75%) agreed to continue, and ultimately contributed to an experiment that ended in all the 'shocks' ostensibly being inflicted on an innocent person without the command of an authority figure.

Also consider, for example, Condition 17a: Teacher in Charge. Before the start of this variation the experimenter stated that he had to leave the laboratory, but as he was departing, he told an actor-teacher to invent a punishment regime, which the other participant-teacher was to implement. At some point—perhaps before or after the experimenter left the laboratory (this is unclear)—the actor-teacher decided to increase the intensity of punishment by 15 volts for each incorrect answer, and then instructed the participant to fulfill the role of shock inflictor. In this condition, 11 out of 20 (55%) participants did as the man of equal status told them and inflicted every shock. In his research notes, a clearly confused Milgram wrote, "we were surprised aond [*sic*] somewhat troubled that 11 should be full[y] obedient under common man authority."[64] The Obedience studies regularly left Milgram "surprised," but this time he was "troubled" perhaps because the result muddied his preconceived view that obedience to an authority caused most participants to complete the New Baseline condition.

Other variations exposed problems with Milgram's terminology. For example, in Condition 18a: Experimenter Absent many participants sought reassurance by calling the distant experimenter on the telephone. Some participants informed the experimenter that they would continue to inflict intensifying shocks for incorrect answers, but in reality, inflicted only low-intensity shocks.[65] Were these participants "obedient" because they said they were doing as they were told, or were they "disobedient" because, despite their words, they flouted the experimenter's instructions? These results that conflicted with Milgram's presuppositions and revealed problems with his terminology appear in his post-experimental analysis.

Milgram's Theoretical Drought

In July 1962, just over a month after collecting all his data, Milgram began working on a theory that would explain why most participants completed the New Baseline experiment. What he came up with was an extension of an earlier idea in which he posited that the participant had

been "reduced to an agent, through [which] […] forbidden acts…bypass his conscience and guilt system."[66] To illustrate his point, Milgram produced the following diagram, which juxtaposed a "NORMAL PERSONALITY" with one whose conscience had been circumvented by "AUTHORITY" (Fig. 5.1).

One obvious problem with this diagram is that it does not explain why "AUTHORITY" might have caused the circumvention of so many participants' consciences. Milgram, therefore, began to suspect that more than one theory was required to account for the New Baseline result.[67] However, before August 1962 a puzzled Milgram started to question the prudence of his methodological approach, which was failing to pay the explanatory dividends he had anticipated. "Sometimes the research does not seem to have advanced my understanding in any important way. And perhaps the way we went about it was the fault."[68] A letter to Gordon Allport illustrates that by 28 October 1962, Milgram's confidence had slumped further still.

The obedience to authority experiments are completed, and I am now writing some articles and a book on this work. My secret estimate is that the material is illuminating, though I don't know if I can convey its import in writing. The narrative bogs down in a superfluity of technical details.[69]

Fig. 5.1 Milgram's early post-experimental theoretical contemplations (SMP, Box 46, Folder 164)

During this difficult period in 1962, Milgram, as mentioned, wrote his article *Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority*, not published until 1965.[70] While attempting to account for his results, the article presents a number of specific factors that were likely to have been involved, which included some insightful remarks on what he referred to as empathic cues, denial and a narrowing of the cognitive field, and Reciprocal fields.[71] However, with a young family, new research opportunities and, especially, a chronic case of writer's block,[72] by November 1964 he had conceded defeat in his quest to develop a grand theory of obedience.

> It would be very satisfying to bring these diverse strand [*sic*] of explanation together into a single, unifying statement. [*sic*] of theory. One that would serpate [*sic*] out overlap and duplication, semantic confusion, and genuine opposition of idea. But this task is beyond the means of the present author…[73]

Without a theory Milgram could not complete a comprehensive book on the research program and his publication ambitions stalled.[74] In time, however, Milgram would come back to the problem and publish a long-awaited book that explained his findings.

MILGRAM'S (1974) BOOK AND THE AGENTIC STATE

Fourteen years after undertaking his first official experiment, Milgram finally published his book, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*.[75] In it, he presents eighteen experimental conditions and the results of his survey of psychiatrists, college students, and middle-class adults.[76]

The book did not include, however, the promised (1965) overview of Condition 24: Relationship.[77] This condition remained virtually unknown until 1997 when François Rochat and Andre Modigliani discovered it in Milgram's personal archive.[78] Other variations he left out include: Condition 15b: Good Experimenter/Bad Experimenter; Condition 17a: Teacher in Charge; Condition 17b: Teacher in Charge (Experimenter Returns); Condition 18b: Experimenter Returns; and Condition 19: No Experimenter—all of which were first published by Perry.[79]

So why did Milgram not publish these experiments? Some were so methodologically weak that he may have deemed them unpublishable

(Condition 19: No Experimenter, for example).[80] Others, like the Relationship condition, were perhaps so unethical that Milgram came to fear the wrath of his critics. But probably the main reason why a handful of variations are missing from Milgram's book is that their results conflicted with or complicated the bold theoretical statements he wished to make.[81] In short, the book argues that, "It is the extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any lengths on the command of an authority that constitutes the chief finding of the study and the fact most urgently demanding explanation."[82] In effect, he returned to his preconceived view that orders from a higher authority caused most participants to act, and included those variations that bolstered this conclusion while he eliminated those that competed with this Obedience to Authority mantra.[83] As Perry puts it, "When it suited him, he used this data; when it didn't suit him, he ignored it."[84]

With most of the handpicked variations in his book pointing to the commands of the experimenter as the key variable behind the New Baseline result, Milgram offered his long-awaited theory detailing the "causes of obedience."[85] Like many animals, he began, human beings function in hierarchical structures. Due to the survival value of organization over disorganization, hierarchical structures have, via breeding, led humans to develop significant advantages over their competitors in the natural environment. Obedience to those higher in the chain of command is not innate, however, "rather, we are born with a *potential* for obedience, which then interacts with the influence of society to produce the obedient man."[86] More specifically, humankind's more destructive impulses are kept in check by the conscience of an autonomously acting individual. However, when the individual is introduced into a hierarchical chain of command, a homeostatic-driven internal change can take place, whereby conscience-driven control over one's actions can be suppressed and supplanted by demands from a higher authority. Milgram argues that this change is initiated by an agentic shift, which provides the momentum that enables the individual to enter the *agentic state*. The agentic state is a condition in which, once entered, "the individual no longer views himself as responsible for his own actions but defines himself as an instrument for carrying out the wishes of others."[87]

Milgram then introduces what he terms antecedent conditions: preexperimental factors that can promote the agentic shift. Some examples of antecedent conditions include the long-term influence of institutionalized authority systems like parents, school, and the workplace.

Antecedent conditions inherent in the experimental procedure included a legitimating belief in scientific inquiry. Furthermore, the influence of the agentic state on an individual could be enhanced by binding factors, powerful bonds that can entrap people into doing things they might otherwise prefer not to do. An example of such a binding factor is the sequential nature of the action where incremental steps—the foot-in-the-door technique—generated the momentum that made a withdrawal from the experiment increasingly difficult. Antecedent conditions and binding factors accelerate the entry of many individuals into the agentic state.

As Milgram notes, however, "If the individual's submergence in the authority system were total, he would feel no tension as he followed commands, no matter how harsh…"[88] Yet, because of the learner's cries of pain during the experiments, many participants started to question the experimenter's intentions and experienced what Milgram termed "strain"—feelings of nervousness often expressed in the form of sweating and trembling. So, some participants only partially transform into the agentic state. But detracting from the ability of strain to produce disobedience were certain buffers termed "strain resolving mechanisms," factors that could reduce the feelings of stress and tension normally associated with participation in the infliction of harm. Some of the mechanisms Milgram mentions specifically in the book are: the shock generator itself; avoidance-type behaviors such as looking away from the learner; and the tendency of some participants to comply with the experimenter's demands while reducing their own complicity by engaging in simultaneous acts of sabotage, such as verbally emphasizing the learner the correct answers to the questions.

Figure 5.2 illustrates Milgram's conceptualization of the agentic state and its close relationship with antecedent conditions, binding factors, strain, and strain resolving mechanisms.

In explaining not only obedience but also disobedience, Milgram conveyed his theoretical model by way of the following formula, and its accompanying explanation:

$$O; B > (s - r)$$
$$D; B < (s - r)$$

in which O represents obedience; D, disobedience; B, binding factors; s, strain; and r, the strain-resolving mechanisms. Obedience is the outcome when the binding factors are greater than the net strain (strain as reduced by the resolving mechanisms), while disobedience results when net strain exceeds the strength of the binding forces.[89]
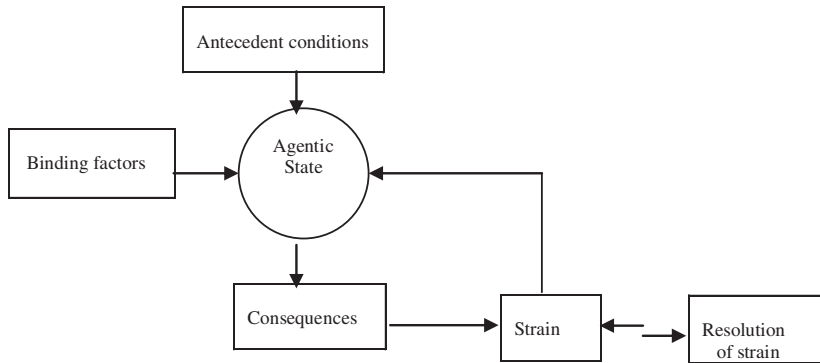
Fig. 5.2 Factors that contribute to the agentic shift and maintain the participant within the obedience-generating agentic state (For the original diagram, see Milgram [1974, p. 154])

So what, if anything, did this theory say about the perpetration of the Holocaust? Although Milgram conceded "enormous differences" between his experiments and the Holocaust, he maintained that, via the hierarchical chain of command, the agentic state was "a common psychological process...centrally involved in both events."[90] Milgram writes,

> The most common adjustment of thought in the obedient subject is for him to see himself as not responsible for his own actions. He divests himself of responsibility by attributing all initiative to the experimenter, a legitimate authority. He sees himself not as a person acting in a morally accountable way but as the agent of external authority. In the postexperimental interview, when subjects were asked why they had gone on, a typical reply was: 'I wouldn't have done it by myself. I was just doing what I was told.' Unable to defy the authority of the experimenter, they attribute all responsibility to him. It is the old story of 'just doing one's duty' that was heard time and time again in the defense statements of those accused at Nuremberg. But it would be wrong to think of it as a thin alibi concocted for the occasion. Rather, it is a fundamental mode of thinking for a great many people once they are locked into a subordinate position in a structure of authority. The disappearance of a sense of responsibility is the most far-reaching consequence of submission to authority.[91]

It is clear that Milgram believed Nazi war criminals and his own participants when each argued that they did not believe themselves to be responsible for their actions. Also, when members of these groups stated that they believed themselves to have been mere instruments of a higher authority, again, Milgram believed them.

Conclusion

After achieving his first (unofficial) goal of obtaining a high (New) Baseline completion rate, Milgram moved on to his second official goal to determine why so many participants completed the experiment through an array of baseline variations. Milgram's strategy was to run a wide variety of variations that would, through a process of elimination, lead him to an overall theory of obedience.

The share size of this enormous research program demanded considerable organizational efficiency, actions that arguably lend weight to Max Weber's concept of formal rationality. Milgram's means-to-end organizational skills perhaps saw him break new boundaries in social science research: more participants, more data, and perhaps, more publications. The control and predictability Milgram was able to achieve over the Remote and New Baseline results took research efficiency to new levels, producing exactly the kind of results he needed to achieve his preconceived goal.

Milgram's plan to test variations on the New Baseline experiment promised, at least initially, to reveal what lay behind most of his participants' obedient behavior. However, in several significant cases, the results conflicted with Milgram's main explanatory schema—the higher status of an authority figure—and before long the data started to undermine his confidence, stalling his ambitions to develop a comprehensive theory. Nevertheless, over a decade after the conclusion of the research program, Milgram finally published his long-awaited book in which he elucidated his theory of the agentic state wherein an individual as a subordinate link within a hierarchical chain of command honestly did not believe himself/herself responsible for essential contributions to a harmful process. Much as many Germans during the Holocaust did not believe themselves responsible for their harmful contributions, participants in his study, as lowly subordinates, also did not feel personally responsible for their actions. Instead, again like many Germans, these participants

often believed themselves to have been mere instruments in the hands of a higher authority. The implication was that one should not blame the hammer for striking the nail.

In the following chapter, I explore academia's broad and diverse reactions to both the Obedience studies and Milgram's agentic state theory. In returning to the Milgram-Holocaust linkage, this chapter also explores the applicability of the agentic state to perpetrator behavior during the Holocaust.

Notes

1. Milgram (1974, p. 37).
2. SMP, Box 46, Folder 175.
3. Quoted in Meyer (1970, p. 130).
4. Quoted in Blass (2004, p. 100).
5. Milgram (1974, pp. 55–56).
6. Milgram (1974, p. 56).
7. Milgram (1974, p. 56).
8. Consider, for example, the following learner response from Condition 3 Proximity after the penultimate 435-volt shock: "Ahh. What's the use in going on with this thing? I told you, I'm not going on with the experiment anymore." Upon which, the experimenter said, "Just relax please. Try and concentrate on what the teacher is saying. Please continue Teacher" (SMP, Box 155, Audiotape #0303).
9. Although the first four experiments were included as part of the official research program, because Milgram was, as he undertook them, still trying to refine the basic experimental procedure, the Proximity Series were really an extension of his pilot studies (or at least should have been labeled as such). Milgram could have but did not rerun the Proximity Series using the standardized (New) Baseline procedure. If he had done so, it would have been interesting to observe how participants in the Touch-Proximity condition would have reacted at the 345-volt switch to the experimenter's demand that they force the (presumably) unconscious learner's hand on to the shock plate.
10. Milgram (1965, p. 74).
11. Perry (2012, p. 102).
12. SMP, Box 43, Folder 127.
13. Nicholson (2015, p. 645).
14. Perry (2012, p. 240).
15. Ritzer (1996, p. 144).
16. Ritzer (1996, pp. 17–27).

17. Ritzer (2015, pp. 35–36).
18. Ritzer (2015, p. 107).
19. Patterson (2002, p. 73).
20. Ritzer (1996, pp. 25–26).
21. Ritzer (2015, p. 37).
22. Ritzer (2015, p. 120).
23. Ritzer (2015, p. 128).
24. Ritzer (1983, 1996).
25. Ritzer (2015, pp. 135, 140).
26. Ritzer (2015, p. 70).
27. Ritzer (2015, p. 91).
28. Ritzer (2015, p. 70).
29. Ritzer (1996, p. 105).
30. Ritzer (2015, p. 123).
31. Quoted in Ritzer (2015, p. 43). Although Kroc said this, it was the McDonalds brothers who eliminated chefs from the McDonald's model (p. 42).
32. Ritzer (2015, p. 44).
33. Ritzer (2015, p. 44).
34. Ritzer (2015, p. 44).
35. Wolfson (2005).
36. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mpAbig8ttY. Accessed 8 September 2017.
37. Ritzer (2015, p. 132).
38. Ritzer (1996, p. 31).
39. Ritzer (1996, pp. 1–3).
40. Ritzer (1996, p. 18).
41. Ritzer (2015, p. 30). In reference to "incremental deviations", as Allison (1971, p. 68) argues: "organizations do change. Learning occurs gradually, over time."
42. Nonetheless, some suggested "improvements" can inadvertently have the opposite effect—the controversial inefficiencies of the so-called "red tape." When clients raise this criticism, their frustration is typically less about inefficiency and much more about how ruthless and impersonal they feel bureaucracies treat them (Blau and Meyer 1971, pp. 148–149). As Weber argues, bureaucracy is clearly far superior to other forms of organization (see Gerth and Mills 1974, p. 214).
43. Allan (2013, p. 172) and Blau and Meyer (1971, pp. 23–24).
44. Gerth and Mills (1974, pp. 196-204).
45. Ritzer (1996, pp. 19–20). See Gerth and Mills (1974, pp. 196–244).
46. Ritzer (1996, p. 109).
47. Hilberg (1980, p. 101).

48. Elms (1995, p. 76).
49. Perry (2012, p. 385).
50. See, for example, Bauman (1989, pp. 151–168).
51. Perry (2012, p. 1).
52. Elms (1995, p. 75).
53. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2438.
54. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2428.
55. Milgram (1965).
56. Elms (1995, p. 28).
57. Milgram (1965, p. 71).
58. Three of the teachers in the Relationship condition were blood or legal relatives of the learner (Russell 2014, pp. 198–199).
59. Three out of 17 of the participants in the Relationship condition who were either acquaintances or friends of the learner inflicted all the shocks (Rochat and Modigliani 1997, p. 238).
60. Milgram (1974, pp. 9–10). See, also, for example, Bandura et al. (1975). As one of Milgram's participants later noted: "I sincerely believe that if the student was a younger person or a person to whom I held a grievance against I would of [*sic*] continued to punish him far beyond what I went with the old man. I had no reason to punish the man so I stopped before the end" (SMP, Box 44, Divider "8", #1818).
61. Milgram (1965, p. 69).
62. Milgram (1965, p. 70).
63. Milgram (1974, p. 70).
64. SMP, Box 46, Folder 163.
65. Milgram (1974, p. 62).
66. SMP, Box 13, Folder 183.
67. See the document titled "One Theory or Many" (SMP, Box 46, Folder 164).
68. SMP, Box 46, Folder 164.
69. SMP, Box 13, Folder 183.
70. Milgram (1965).
71. Milgram (1965, pp. 63–64).
72. Darley (1992, p. 206) and Elms (1995, pp. 28–29).
73. SMP, Box 46, Folder 175.
74. Elms (1995, p. 78).
75. Milgram (1974).
76. See Condition 21: Educated Opinion in Table One (above).
77. Milgram (1965).
78. Rochat and Modigliani (1997).
79. Perry (2012).
80. See, for example, Milgram (1965, p. 66). If participants in the New Baseline condition often struggled to follow the experimenter's

personally delivered instructions, it was quite possible that many of the participants in No Experimenter condition would have failed to understand or misinterpreted instructions relayed by a tape recording.

81. Perry (2012, p. 202).
82. Milgram (1974, p. 5).
83. Milgram (1974, pp. 58–70, 89–112) and Russell (2009, Chapter Five).
84. Perry (2012, p. 165).
85. Milgram (1974, pp. 123).
86. Milgram (1974, p. 125).
87. Milgram (1974, p. 134).
88. Milgram (1974, p. 155).
89. Milgram (1974, p. 154).
90. Milgram (1974, p. 175).
91. Milgram (1974, pp. 7–8).

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Academia's Response to Milgram's Findings and Explanation

In 1964, Diana Baumrind wrote the first scholarly critique of Milgram's Obedience to Authority research. Baumrind sharply criticized Milgram's study on multiple fronts, arguing that his research was unethical, methodologically flawed, and could not be generalized to an event like the Holocaust. Milgram's rejoinder, which discussed the findings of the wider and then mostly unpublished research program, weakened many of Baumrind's criticisms,[1] yet it was far from conclusive, and certain questions lingered. Inadvertently, Baumrind's multifaceted critique drew other academics into the debate, both for and against Milgram.[2] Without exaggeration, her seminal article proved to be the catalyst for passionate debates that have raged for more than half a century.[3] McGaha and Korn have gone so far to argue that Baumrind's "strong negative critique" of the Obedience studies stimulated "the most intense debate on research ethics in the history of psychology…"[4] This chapter provides a brief overview of the key issues Milgram's academic peers debated. More specifically, I present and assess the prominent ethical and methodological critiques. And with a focus on the Holocaust, I explore the debate over the generalizability of Milgram's results beyond his laboratory walls. Finally, this chapter examines the scholarly reaction to Milgram's theory of the agentic state, particularly with reference to its application to the Milgram-Holocaust linkage.

Ethical Issues

Perhaps the most common negative reaction to Milgram's first published results centered on the study's arguably unethical treatment of its participants.[5] Of particular concern were the potential long-term psychological and physiological harms associated with participation. As Milgram said in his first publication, one participant entered the laboratory, cheerful and merry, only to be "reduced to a twitching, stuttering wreck, who was rapidly approaching a point of nervous collapse."[6] Critics pointed out that Milgram did not inform his participants of the potential risks before exposing them to his experiment, and he, therefore, failed to obtain their informed consent.[7] Furthermore, some, like Schuler, considered the experiments unethical because Milgram had blatantly attempted to deny the participants' right to withdraw by having the experimenter telling them "you must continue."[8] Still, others regarded the debriefing sessions as at best "casual,"[9] and therefore incapable of restoring the well-being of participants reduced to "stuttering wrecks…"

In response to this latter criticism, Milgram pointed out that,

> A most important aspect of the procedure occurred at the end of the experimental session. A careful postexperimental treatment was administered to all subjects. The exact content of the dehoax varied from condition to condition and with increasing experience on our part. *At the very least all subjects were told that the victim had not received dangerous electric shocks. Each subject had a friendly reconciliation with the unharmed victim, and an extended discussion with the experimenter.* (Italics added)[10]

Moreover, after participating, every participant received a detailed report about the experiments and was surveyed about their post-experimental feelings.[11] In 1963, a psychiatrist was hired to interview forty participants Milgram had identified as most upset by the experiments.[12] These measures led Miller to conclude that "in terms of the thoroughness of debriefing, as well as the empirical assessment of subjects' post-experimental attitudes, the procedures used by Milgram would seem to qualify as a model for laboratory research with human subjects."[13]

Evidence drawn from Milgram's personal archive, however, tells a less flattering story. The post-experimental debrief was unlikely to have been the "most important aspect" of the procedure. It appears to have been far more experimental and ad hoc than Milgram was willing to publicly

concede. For starters, the post-experimental survey sent out to all participants stated, "Actually, <u>the other man did not receive any shocks</u>. Indeed, he was an actor employed by the project to play the part of the learner."[14] If "at the very least all subjects were told that the victim had not received dangerous shocks," why did Milgram feel the need to repeat the point with an emphasis in the post-experimental survey? According to Perry, around 600 participants in the first 18 conditions were not dehoaxed.[15] More specifically, they were not informed before leaving the laboratory that the learner did not receive any shocks. As one participant claimed, "I was not dehoaxed after the experiment."[16] Another reported in his post-experimental survey,

> I actually checked the death notices in the New Haven Register for at least two weeks after the experiment to see if I had been involved and a contributing factor in the death of the so-called 'learner' - I was very relieved that his name did not appear in such a column.[17]

Although the experimenter did try to calm participants down before they left the laboratory (not always successfully), it appears that in conflict with Milgram's public assurances, most departed feeling that they *had* inflicted what appeared to be excruciating shocks.

A closer look at what actually took place reveals that Milgram typically relied on a deceptive rather than honest debrief. The experimenter informed participants at the end of the experiment that the shock designations were not as painful as both the shock generator's switches or the learner's reactions seemed to suggest. He told participants the machine was calibrated for use on "mice and small rats. […] the verbal designations on this machine 'Slight' to 'Danger' are for these small animals. They are not exactly applicable to human beings."[18] Moreover, the contents of the debrief actually varied (with the aim of reassuring the participant that the learner would be fine), and it was not until the last handful of variations that participants were informed that the learner did not actually receive any shocks. It was the penultimate variation, Condition 23: Institutional Context, featured in Milgram's widely viewed documentary that probably conveyed the general belief that a full and an honest debrief applied throughout.[19]

Milgram likely resorted to a deceptive debriefing in all but the last 20% of conditions because the National Science Foundation had warned him that an honest debriefing would increase the risk of

"subject contamination…"[20] Some participants might later talk about their experiences with future participants within the fairly small New Haven community, thereby ruining the element of deception so critical to the basic experimental procedure. Whatever the case, Milgram failed to treat the debriefing stage with the degree of importance that he both promised and later claimed.[21] Participant welfare, it seems, was neglected in favor of other priorities. As Perry points out, even the idea to hire a psychiatrist to assess the well-being of the most distraught participants was not Milgram's but came from Yale administrators' fearing litigation.[22] Milgram, who frequently observed these psychiatric assessments through a one-way mirror in the hope of using the statements they provided as another source of data, clearly valued the results he recorded above the welfare of his ex-participants.[23]

How could Milgram treat his participants so callously? It seems likely that he suspected his participants would not mind his dishonest and variable debriefing sessions and his prioritization of data over welfare, given that (much like his deceptive Ph.D. research) the Obedience experiments were undertaken with the intention of advancing scientific knowledge. If so, then Milgram perhaps also presumed the Obedience-study participants would understand his reasons for deceiving them, for failing to obtain their informed consent, and for attempting to remove their right to withdraw from the experiment.

Moreover, Milgram also seemed to believe that, other than generating what he termed "momentary excitement,"[24] the Obedience studies were psychologically and physiologically harmless. As he later said, "I had to ask myself, was this harming the person or not? My judgment is that it was not. Even in the extreme cases, I wouldn't say that permanent damage results."[25] Of course, the flaw in this logic is that Milgram had to run the experiments in order to confirm whether or not this assumption was correct. Knowledge of harmlessness could only come in hindsight. Milgram also assumed that he could anticipate every possible short- and long-term consequence associated with participation.[26] Despite Milgram's opinion, documents in his Yale archive suggest the experiments did have the potential to inflict long-term psychological and physical damage, which he both failed to anticipate and negate.

In terms of long-term psychological harm, participation was likely to negatively affect some participants' self-image.[27] For example, Perry illustrates that for one of the "obedient" female participants who happened to be Jewish, the psychological damage of having completed

an experiment that was later touted in the media as capturing the Holocaust in the laboratory setting was clearly long-term and—without exaggeration—devastating.[28] According to this participant's son, the Obedience studies were "a dreadful footnote in her life…"[29] As Perry notes, Milgram does not seem to have considered the effect his experiments would have on the small proportion of Jewish participants, some of whom inflicted every shock.[30] Also, it is not difficult to imagine that completing Condition 24: Relationship would adversely affect the self-image of the 15% of participants who inflicted all the "shocks" on someone who was at least their acquaintance. It is easy to see how these people might come to think of themselves as treacherous and unsavory. Milgram certainly sensed the potential of this condition to fracture relationships. During one debriefing session, he even tried to avert any post-experimental discord by telling a participant who inflicted all the shocks on his screaming friend,

> the main purpose of the experiment was to see how you would react to taking orders. He wasn't really getting the shock, we just set this up this way to see…whether you would be happy to give him the shocks or whether you weren't so happy about it. […] So ahh ahh let's tell him that ahh you knew you weren't giving him the shocks…alright?[31]

In light of such evidence, it is difficult to refute the criticism that the experiments were unethical, certainly in the case of the Relationship condition. In three of the twenty trials of this condition, the learner was a relative: #2422 were brothers-in-law (maximum shock: 165 volts); #2428 were uncle and nephew (maximum shock 180 volts); and #2435 were father and son (maximum shock: 165 volts).[32] The Relationship condition was the last variation in the research program, and at the time, Milgram was struggling to recruit teacher/learner teams. In desperation to bring the data collection phase to an end, Milgram took a phenomenal risk in accepting a father and son team. The father refused early on to continue inflicting shocks, but the question remains—what would the long-term implications have been, had he completed the experiment? Milgram's prioritization of results over participants' relationships and the potential for long-term psychological harm was, even by the lax standards of the day, grossly negligent.

Of course, Milgram never published the Relationship condition even though he had promised to do so as early as 1962. As ethical criticism

intensified following Baumrind's 1964 review, perhaps he feared the censure that might result if it came out just how far he had gone in pursuit of exciting results.[33] If Milgram's critics were appalled at his having undertaken the Remote condition, one can only imagine their reaction had they known about the Relationship condition. Although publishing the Relationship condition would almost certainly have resulted in an ethical firestorm, as I argue later in this chapter, this condition may also resolve one of the most enduring methodological criticisms directed at the Obedience research.

There are other examples of potential long-term psychological harm caused by the experiments. For example, it was not unusual for participants who completed to mention having experienced post-experimental episodes of guilt. As one participant stated, "I can't understand myself for going all the way. It's left me with a guilty feeling."[34] Another participant said he "hated" himself.[35] A few participants later reported that loved ones compared them to Nazi war criminals like Adolf Eichmann.[36] Although some participants acquired potentially disturbing knowledge about themselves ("inflicted insight"), others construed this knowledge to be of personal benefit. One participant reported, "I will remember this, and will think for myself, and act on my own thoughts and fridings [*sic*]."[37] As Kaufmann notes, "learning to know oneself is seldom a gratifying experience, yet one which few of us would forego."[38] However, Kelman questions whether Milgram had the right to provide such disconcerting insights to naïve participants who never asked for them.[39] Elms, who believed that Milgram's experiments provided significant insights into better understanding the Holocaust, would have demurred,

> Should we instead leave people to their moral inertia, or their grave moral laxity, so as not to disturb their privacy? Who is willing to justify privacy on this basis? Who would have done so, with foreknowledge of the results, in pre-Nazi Germany?[40]

As Pigden and Gillet put it, "If you don't know you are sick, you can't seek a cure."[41]

Despite Milgram's belief that the experiments were harmless, early and overt warning signs indicated that the experiments could cause serious, potentially even fatal, injuries. For example, early into the data collection stage, the "disobedient" participant Herbert Winer warned Milgram that he thought medical screening should be introduced.[42]

12 (also T.R. card)   0216

I would here inject a word of caution - since taking part in the
experiment I have suffered a mild heart attack - the onetthing
my doctor tells me that I must avoid is any form of tension -
For this reason I feel that is imperative that you make certain
thàt any prospective participant have a cleah bill of health.

Fig. 6.1 An "IRATE" participant's response after having taken part in the
Obedience studies (SMP, Box 44, Divider "T.R.", #0216)

Others echoed this concern. "Since I became so upset during the exper-
iment, I'm not sure that you were entirely responsible for picking your
subjects. Suppose I'd had a heart condition?"[43] Despite the warnings,
Milgram never introduced any medical screening, perhaps because he
thought such concerns were exaggerated. However, as one "IRATE"
participant's statement in the post-experimental survey illustrates, "on
arriving home" after the experiment, he told his wife that "this had been
the most unpleasant night of my life." He continued (Fig. 6.1).

The reason nobody was, as Herbert Winer puts it, "seriously incon-
venienced" probably had more to do with luck than planning.[44] With no
medical safety-net in place, the experiments really could have ended in
tragedy.

Still, although numerous replications and slight variations of the
Obedience studies have been undertaken throughout the world involv-
ing about 3000 people,[45] it seems no participant has ever suffered per-
manent physical harm. And on the issue of psychological harm, Miller
arrives at the same conclusion. In 1986 he noted, "If one asks this ques-
tion: 'Is participation in the Milgram paradigm psychologically damag-
ing?' the best evidence is that the answer is 'no.'"[46] Miller continued
to stand by this conclusion nearly two decades later,[47] although Perry's
highly critical book may have changed his mind. Even so, Miller recog-
nized a much more complex issue, "However, if one asks a slightly dif-
ferent question: 'Does a research psychologist have the right to expose
subjects to intense stress and conflict?', the answer is less clear."[48]

Researchers frequently resolve such dilemmas by engaging in cost/
benefit analyses wherein they assess whether or not the probable benefits
associated with a research idea are likely to exceed the anticipated costs.

During the data collection stage, Milgram contemplated the potential costs of his experiment's reliance on deception and "momentary excitement" for innocent people.[49] Milgram, however, was initially confident that the study could provide new insights into destructive obedience, something he had long suspected was in some way centrally related to the extermination of European Jews.

> Under what conditions does one ask about destructive obedience? Perhaps under the same conditions that a medical researcher asks about cancer or polio; because it is a threat to human welfare and has shown itself a scourage [*sic*] to humanity. Perhaps the need to understand and conquer the disease becomes more pressing when a member of the family has been hurt by it. The nightmare that engulfed Europe in 1933–45 claimed many victims; none was hit so hard as European Jewry.[50]

For him, the benefits to humanity of understanding and perhaps conquering the so-called disease of "destructive obedience" outweighed the potential costs to participants in the study. Because of his own Jewish background and childhood experiences, the matter may have been of great personal significance to him.[51] With the specter of the Holocaust ever-present, the question became how great a cost was he willing to impose on his participants? With so much apparently at stake, how far would he go? As the Relationship condition best illustrates, Milgram was more than willing for his participants to pay a high price.

In her critique, Baumrind found Milgram's decision to pursue costly experiments paid for solely by his participants offensive.[52] She also disputed Milgram's arguments that the benefits (of which she could see none) were likely to outweigh the costs. Like many others who would follow, Baumrind disputed Milgram's belief that his research provided insights into the Holocaust, or anything at all.[53] The only beneficiary Baumrind could fathom from the Obedience studies was Milgram himself. However, she cautioned, "CERTAIN problems in psychological research require the experimenter to balance his career and scientific interests against the interests of his prospective subjects."[54] To this subtle barb, Milgram, having recently been headhunted by an impressed Harvard University, remained silent.[55] Indeed, the careerist variable is absent from Milgram's cost/benefit analysis, yet Perry's observation that the ambitious Milgram intended to rival the academic achievements of Sherif, Lewin, and Asch, suggests that the young scholar's career aspirations were probably an important factor in his decision to run the

Obedience studies. Milgram justified his callous treatment of participants because doing so might, as mentioned, uncover grand scientific insights into a disaster like the Holocaust. His failure, however, after Baumrind's critique to publish the incomparably unethical Relationship condition does lend some weight to the argument that careerist concerns may actually have been of greater importance to him. I say this because when the dissemination of knowledge happened to threaten his career (much like publishing the Relationship condition would have), career concerns trumped the dissemination of knowledge. In terms of this choice, ironically, Milgram's own words in assessing the value of Asch's experiment are perhaps applicable to his failure to, as he had promised, publish the Relationship condition: "He dares not betray his secret, yet by his actions, he is betrayed."

So was the Obedience research ethical? Arriving at a definitive answer to this question is impossible because the debate between Milgram (and his adherents) and Baumrind (and hers) appears irresolvable. As Miller notes, "the ethical status of a particular research project resides, to a significant extent, in the eye of the beholder," and the pursuit of research is founded on the scientist's subjective values of what constitutes valuable knowledge and whether the costs of obtaining that knowledge are worth paying.[56] With one eye on the Holocaust (and another on his career), Milgram thought the knowledge his research would produce was so important that the potential costs shouldered by his participants were worth paying. Baumrind did not.

Perhaps Miller's point in relation to Laud Humphreys' creative yet controversial research on impersonal sexual encounters in men's public toilets[57] is pertinent: "Put succinctly if not delicately, the issue often seems to come to this: Either one is going to do the research and pay the ethical costs, or one will remain ignorant about this particular arena of social life."[58] Of course, the problem with this argument is that when Milgram decided to run the official research program, he unlikely envisioned having to personally pay few if any of the costs. Instead, he decided on behalf of his participants that they would pay the unpredictable and potentially calamitous costs because—putting aside the "benefits" that pursuing the research might have on his academic career—Milgram believed humanity could not afford to remain ignorant. Here Milgram took an enormous gamble because he assumed that his harm-inflicting (dangerous?) results could be generalized beyond the laboratory, when they might, as Baumrind noted, have no value at all.

Perhaps in the eyes of some impartial observers, Milgram's name could be somewhat redeemed and his risky and daring (arrogant?) decision to proceed mitigated, if the Obedience studies were to provide a better understanding of significant events in the outside world. So perhaps an important determining factor of the ethicality of Milgram's research is the explanatory value of the results, particularly regarding its ability to better understand the Holocaust? Before it is possible to assess the generalizability of Milgram's results and theory, it is important that the study overcomes the most resilient methodological criticisms that directed its way. If the experiments were methodologically weak, then it is no use attempting to generalize from a flawed foundation.[59]

Methodological Criticisms

The most important methodological criticism brought to bear on the Obedience studies concerns whether or not Milgram successfully deceived his participants into believing that the learner was receiving dangerous electric shocks. Doing so was "critical" because the foundation of Milgram's research hinged on participants believing the learner was being harmed.[60] Orne and Holland, followed by Mixon, offer the two most powerful critiques of this aspect of the study.

In 1968, Martin Orne and Charles Holland argued that Milgram's attempts to deceive his participants probably failed because participants would have known, if only in the backs of their minds, that the experimenter (or even Yale University) would not have allowed such dangerous shocks to be inflicted on the learner. Therefore, participants were likely to presume that, despite evidence to the contrary, the final outcome would be "all right."[61] But if participants did not believe the learner was being shocked, why did most go to the trouble of completing Milgram's experiment? Orne and Holland argue that most participants completed the Obedience study because they were influenced by what Orne had earlier termed "demand characteristics."[62] Demand characteristics emerge when participants attempt to detect the meaning and purpose of an experiment and then engage in behaviors they suspect are likely to please the researcher by confirming the probable hypothesis. In such a scenario, most participants, realizing the experiment was actually about obedience to authority and knowing the learner was only pretending to

be in pain, likely felt obligated to give Milgram the high completion rates he obviously desired. So how did Orne and Holland's argument fare?

Although Milgram conceded that a small minority did not believe the shocks were genuine, he responded to Orne and Holland by pointing out that 56.1 and 24% of participants, respectively, reported in the post-experimental interviews; they "fully" and "probably" believed the learner was being shocked.[63] Therefore, a total of 80.1% of participants seemed convinced by the procedure (a conclusion independently and more rigorously confirmed by other researchers who replicated the studies).[64]

Having personally listened to some of the audio tapes in Milgram's archive, I agree with Bruce Eckman that "when one reads the actual transcripts of Milgram's subjects' verbal behavior, it is hard to conclude it was all a put-on. There was just too much conflict and stress."[65] Orne and Holland's claim fails to account for the participants' patent internal conflict and genuinely stressful experiences. Milgram himself had no patience for Orne and Holland's opinion "that the subjects only *feigned* sweating, trembling, and stuttering to please the experimenter," suggesting that saying so was "equivalent to the statement that hemophiliacs bleed to keep their physicians busy" (Italics original).[66]

There are two other reasons why demand characteristics are unlikely to have been the key determinant of Milgram's results. First, if participants knew the shocks were fake, why after completing the New Baseline did 73% decline an opportunity to experience the apparently fake 450-volt shock they had just inflicted on the learner?[67] Second, if participants were only acting to please the experimenter, why did so many go to the trouble of engaging in covert acts of sabotage? Milgram noticed that,

> Some subjects could be observed signaling the correct answer to the victim by stressing it vocally as they read the multiple-choice words aloud. That is, they attempted to prompt the learner and thus prevent his receiving shocks. These subjects are willing to undermine the experiment but not to cause an open break with authority.[68]

Similarly, other participants tried to deceive the experimenter and avoid having to punish the learner by failing to fully depress the shock switch.[69] These attempts at sabotage were so common that the experimenter had to pay close attention to ensure participants performed their

tasks correctly.[70] Why would so many participants have gone to all this trouble to deceive the experimenter if, as Orne and Holland claimed, the experiment was so obviously fake? I therefore agree with Eckman: "To invoke the charge 'demand characteristics' against Milgram's work is foolish."[71]

Having said this, Orne and Holland's issue of trust—that participants knew all along that the experimenter would never have allowed an innocent person to be harmed and that by demanding the infliction of more severe shocks, the experimenter was implying that it was safe to do so—lingered.[72] As one participant who completed the experiment later said, "the way I figured it, you're not going to cause yourselves trouble by actually giving serious physical damage to a body."[73]

Don Mixon's research supports the validity of Orne and Holland's issue of trust. He was one of the first to replicate the Obedience studies using role-playing. This methodological technique enabled him to avoid the potentially unethical use of deception. Before starting the experiment, he informed the participant that the learner is an actor, the shocks are not authentic, and they are to pretend the experiment is real. Despite producing results in accordance with Milgram's, Mixon is nonetheless a critic of the Obedience studies.[74] He argues that audiences find the Obedience studies convincing because of the participants' outpouring of emotional tension.[75] The participants' palpable displays of stress appear to illustrate that they believed the shocks were really harmful. But, in fact, Milgram's participants were, according to Mixon, stressed not because they confronted an intense moral dilemma to stop or continue inflicting shocks, but rather due to their exposure to an ambiguous situation in which the information coming from the experimenter and learner was contradictory. The shocks were apparently harmful, but not dangerous; the experimenter was calm, but the learner was screaming in agony. As Mixon observed, "No wonder many subjects showed such stress. What to believe? The right thing to do depends on which actor is believed."[76] According to Mixon, as "increasingly large chunks of the social and physical world that we live in can be understood only by experts,"[77] most participants resolved the stressfully ambiguous situation by trusting the authority figure's word that the learner would not be hurt.

If correct, this critique suggests that Milgram had effectively failed to deceive most participants into believing they were hurting the learner

even though they showed great stress. Its validity, Mixon claims, can be verified by testing the following assertion: when the consequences of inflicting harm are unambiguous, participants will not complete the Obedience studies. Mixon has provided several lines of evidence that lend weight to this claim. First, in what he claims are Milgram's three least ambiguous experiments where it was (apparently) most clear that if the participant continued up the shock board, the learner would definitely be hurt (Conditions 10: Learner Demands to be Shocked, 12: Authority as Victim, and 15a: Two Authorities, Contradictory Commands), all participants refused to complete.[78] Second, the more ambiguous the learner's fate appeared, the higher the completion rates.[79] Third, in a role-play replication engineered by Mixon that removed all ambiguity surrounding the learner's fate (the experimenter informed the participant that "The learner's health is irrelevant…continue as directed"), completions slumped.[80]

Thus, Mixon argued, ambiguity caused Milgram's high completion rates, and not, as Milgram claimed, the agentic state. In support of Mixon, and as shown, during the pilot studies Milgram did purposefully inject ambiguity into his basic procedure with the intention of maximizing obedience. He changed the title of the last button on his shock machine from "LETHAL" to "XXX." Likewise, he substituted a translucent screen between participant and learner in the first pilot study with a full partition. Each change was likely to create a more ambiguous, and therefore more stressful and potentially obedient, situation.

Although Mixon's methodological critique appears convincing, it is not without its own explanatory problems. For example, it is incapable of explaining why participants decided to stop, especially those in the Relationship condition. This condition included just as much ambiguity as the New Baseline condition but generated a 50% lower completion rate (15 versus 65%, respectively). So despite the Relationship condition's inherent ambiguity, 85% of participants refused to place their trust in the experimenter's "expert" status. Most participants in the Relationship condition did not react with confusion; their actions and words indicated an unambiguous certitude. One participant in the Relationship condition was certain his friend was not being shocked—and was therefore confident that the experiment was a ruse—but he still refused to trust the experimenter:

Teacher: "I don't believe this! I mean, go ahead."
Experimenter: "You don't believe what?" […]
Teacher: "I don't believe you were giving him the shock."
Experimenter: "Then why, why won't you continue?"
Teacher: "Well I, I just don't want to take a chance, I mean I, I"
Experimenter: "Well if you don't believe that he's getting the shocks, why
    don't you just continue with the test and we'll finish it?"
Teacher: "Well I, I can't, because I can't take that chance."[81]

Although this participant did not believe his friend was being
shocked, the fact is *he could not be certain*. The participants' uncer-
tainty dictated that he could not afford to "take that chance" and trust
the experimenter, because there was still a possibility his hunch might
be wrong. And this participant was obviously well aware of the con-
sequences that such a mistake would have for his friend. This kind of
response was not limited to the Relationship condition. As another suspi-
cious and uncooperative participant in one of the non-Relationship con-
ditions said, "When I decided that I wouldn't go along with any more
shocks, my feeling was 'plant or not…I was not going to take a chance
that our learner would get hurt.'"[82] These and similar responses sug-
gest that, as far as these participants knew, the experimenter could have
been a rogue "mad scientist,"[83] someone not to be trusted. Mixon's
and Orne and Holland's suspicions that trust caused the high comple-
tion rates buckle when considered alongside how these disobedient par-
ticipants resolved the ambiguous situation they confronted. Moreover, I
would suggest that the refusal to take the potentially devastating risk of
being wrong not only played on the minds of many disobedient partici-
pants but also helps to resolve the long-standing methodological debate
between Milgram and Mixon.

As Mixon correctly argued, Milgram's inherently ambiguous base-
line procedure ensured that participants could not be certain they were
inflicting real shocks on the learner. This ambiguity was accentuated
by the inability of participants to see the learner because of the parti-
tion separating them. The ambiguity inherent in the procedure, Mixon
argues, weakens the methodological strength of the Obedience stud-
ies because certainty regarding the infliction of harm would likely have
caused participants to disobey. But, it can also be argued that the deliber-
ate creation of ambiguity was a necessary ingredient in the construction
of the participants' moral dilemma either to stop or to continue inflicting

shocks. If a participant suspected that the learner was not being shocked and, for whatever reason, continued doing as they were told, their decision necessitated they take a potentially devastating risk. Inherent ambiguity in the procedure therefore created the possibility of the participant being wrong. This risk, I would argue, is actually an essential methodological ingredient in the creation of the moral dilemma the studies tested. Would the participant continue to place the learner's welfare at risk because of their suspicion that he was unlikely being harmed? Or would they choose the safer option and eliminate any possibility of being wrong by refusing to inflict further "shocks"? From this perspective, the ambiguity and uncertainty inherent in Milgram's basic experimental procedure is not a methodological weakness. On the contrary, the ambiguity and uncertainty Milgram injected into the procedure introduced the possibility that participants might be wrong with potentially devastating consequences for the learner.[84] If all participants were certain that the learner was not being shocked, there would not have been any chance of being wrong. And if there was no possibility of being wrong, then participants would not have had to resolve a moral dilemma, which is what the experiment ultimately tested. Thus, the ambiguity inherent in Milgram's basic experimental procedure was not a methodological weakness. Instead, it was a necessary component in the construction of the moral dilemma that participants were forced to resolve.

Mixon would likely dispute that the participants' dilemma had a moral dimension for the same reason outlined by Obedience studies scholar Jerry Burger:

> When you're in that situation, wondering, should I continue or should I not, there are reasons to do both. What you do have is an expert in the room who knows all about this study, and presumably has been through this many times before with many participants, and he's telling you, [t]here's nothing wrong. The reasonable, rational thing to do is to listen to the guy who's the expert when you're not sure what to do.[85]

Because a participant's decision to trust the expert necessitated they take a potentially devastating risk on an innocent person's well-being, doing as one was told was neither a reasonable nor rational solution. The most reasonable and rational response was instead err on the side of caution.[86] Doing so would eliminate the risk associated with being wrong and

secure the well-being of a fellow human being. For these reasons, I argue the participants' conundrum constitutes a moral dilemma.

Mixon's critique of the Obedience studies—that most participants were confused and therefore placed their trust in the expert—is therefore a methodological red herring (as was Milgram's obsession over whether or not participants believed they were really hurting the learner).[87] The actual issue of importance is whether or not participants would place the learner's well-being at risk. When viewed from this perspective, the 35% of participants who stopped the New Baseline experiment—whether fully deceived or suspicious—were unwilling to place the learner's well-being at risk. Conversely, the 65% of participants who completed the experiment—whether fully deceived or suspicious—were willing to place the learner's well-being at risk.[88]

A final methodological criticism remains to be addressed. Perry has more recently observed that over the course of Milgram's score of conditions, Williams, the experimenter, became more coercive and more adept at ensuring participants were "railroaded" into completing.[89] In the early experimental variations, Williams readily submitted to a participant's desire to stop. But in later iterations he became more insistent. Perry notes that in one trial of Condition 20: Women the experimenter insisted the participant continue 26 times.[90] Perry is on strong ground when she argues that the experimental program lacked standardization, and Williams' evolving responses to participant resistance is a clear "case of moving the goalposts."[91] The only objection to Perry's criticism is that it is unlikely to apply to the many replications of the original studies, which still obtained similar results.[92]

Indeed, whether carried out with different types of victims,[93] in different settings,[94] or in different countries,[95] a diverse range of replications[96] nearly all supports the phenomenon Milgram discovered over half a century ago.[97] As Miller et al. state, "a range of diverse methodologies that triangulate on the same conceptual issues is a vital criterion of scientific inquiry (e.g., Brewer & Collins, 1981; Campbell & Fiske, 1959)."[98] In the case of the Obedience studies, this methodological triangulation continues to reinforce the internal validity of Milgram's research. Put simply, most replications of the Obedience studies have generated the same surprisingly high completion rates. The replicability of the Obedience studies suggests that Milgram's basic findings are likely to be internally valid. If true, can Milgram's findings and theory be generalized to the Holocaust? That is, is there a Milgram-Holocaust linkage?

Generalizability: The Milgram-Holocaust Linkage

Early in the Obedience studies Milgram stated his belief that his research had captured, in the laboratory setting, behaviors synonymous with the Holocaust. Already in 1964, however, Baumrind criticized Milgram's idea, engaging in what Mook facetiously termed "count-'em mechanics"[99]—listing differences between the Obedience studies and the Holocaust in an attempt to render any linkage externally invalid. Baumrind pointed out that, unlike the Obedience studies, the perpetrators of the Holocaust labeled their victims subhuman and, because they believed in an ultimate goal, did not feel any conflict or guilt over their victims' fates.[100] Perhaps sensing he had gone too far, Milgram quickly moderated his view and identified an even wider array of differences. These included the absence in his experiments of victim vilification ("life unworthy of life") and long-term ideological indoctrination. Also, unlike members of Nazi execution squads, participants were told their victims would not receive permanent injuries.[101] Though Milgram frequently distanced his experiments from the Holocaust, he also could not resist bridging that gap at times, as he did in the preface of the German translation of his book, where he stated,[102]

> My guess is, after conducting the experiments reported in this book, that if the same institutions arose in the United States—the concentration camps, the gas chambers—there would be no problem finding Americans to operate them.

From the mid-1970s, however, many other researchers drew the connection between the Obedience studies and the Holocaust.[103] Probably the most forceful proponents of the linkage were Milgram's ex-students John Sabini and Maury Silver who argued that during the Holocaust, cruelty and hatred were indisputably present, but they were not necessary features. To achieve a goal as broad as the extermination of the European Jews, Sabini and Silver argued, the capricious beast had to be replaced by the coercive and emotionless bureaucratic machine. "The requisite bureaucracy…would be responsive to the will of the ultimate authority through a hierarchy of responsibility […] It was this bureaucratization of evil, the institutionalization of murder, that marked the Third Reich."[104] Central to Sabini and Silver's argument are three key similarities they saw between the Nazi's bureaucratic machinery of destruction and some of Milgram's Obedience experiments. First, in Condition 13: Peer Administers Shock, they noted the presence of a division of labor

(an inherent characteristic of bureaucracy). Here, the punishment of the learner was broken down into more than one task: an actor-participant inflicted the punishment for incorrect answers while the actual participant performed the subsidiary task of asking the learner the word-pair questions. The condition gave rise to a 92.5% completion rate. Sabini and Silver argued that, much like participants in the Peer Administers Shock condition, "The vast majority of the millions implicated in the Holocaust," those who organized, filled, and guarded the trains, built the death camps, and produced the poisonous gas, for example, "were involved in analogous, subsidiary but essential functions."[105] Second, Sabini and Silver referenced Milgram's findings during the Proximity Series that the greater the distance separating the participant from the learner, the higher the overall completion rate. They noted that, due to the division of labor, most Nazi perpetrators remained distant from the actual act of killing.[106] Third, they highlighted the entrapment process (the so-called foot-in-the-door phenomenon) inherent in the incremental increase in commitment discernable during both the Obedience studies, where a gradual escalation in shock intensity encouraged completion, and the Holocaust, where, as Hilberg demonstrates, "Hitler's program…similarly advanced by degrees."[107] Sabini and Silver's research not only seemed to strengthen the Milgram-Holocaust linkage but also moved the Obedience studies a little closer to Hilberg's classic analysis of the Nazi bureaucratic machine.[108] Two years after Milgram's death in 1984,[109] Miller published a comprehensive overview of the literature on the Obedience studies that praises Sabini and Silver and their endorsement of Milgram's work to better understanding of the Holocaust.[110]

In fact, beyond the realm of Holocaust studies, a variety of scholars have expanded on the purported connection between the Obedience studies and destructive bureaucracies.[111] Blass notes,

> One of the profound effects of the…experiments has been to serve as a constant reminder of the inherent dangers lurking within organizational environments, which have become perhaps *the* central feature of modern life. Professions such as marketing, accounting, and management have drawn practical lessons from the obedience studies, alerting their practitioners to Milgram's warning in *Obedience to Authority* that when an individual "merges…into an organizational structure, a new creature replaces autonomous man, unhindered by the limitations of individual morality, freed of humane inhibition, mindful only of the sanctions of authority."

Observations like these about the evaporation of individual responsibility in hierarchical organizations anticipated the kinds of tragedies that later resulted from automakers' employees' willingness to follow their bosses' directives to produce unsafe cars and tobacco company employees' acquiescence to policies designed to deceive the public. (Italics original)[112]

It is interesting to note that, according to Miller, this literature on organizations and organizational behavior has generated "no noticeable controversy," yet generalizing in a similar way from the Obedience studies to the Holocaust remains highly controversial.[113] Consider another example, Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust*, which dedicates an entire chapter to the Obedience studies.[114] With a focus on rationality and bureaucracy, Bauman picks up and extends on Sabini and Silver's Milgram-Holocaust linkage, again edging Milgram's research closer to Hilberg. And likewise, Bauman attracted harsh criticism.[115] In 1993, however, a significant shift occurred within psychology away from the linkage when Blass expressed his reservations. After noting Arendt's account in the preface of Naumann's book *Auschwitz* which, as mentioned, detailed numerous gratuitous acts of cruelty that occurred during the Holocaust, Blass notes:

The historical evidence on the spontaneity, inventiveness, and enthusiasm with which the Nazis degraded, hurt, and killed their victims also argues against explaining their behavior as simply responses to an authority's commands despite the perpetrators' abhorrence of their own actions, and without hate towards their victims. It must have come from within.[116]

Blass's claim alludes to an old debate between social and personality psychologists over whether actions are determined by the dispositional characteristics of individuals or the situations in which people find themselves. With respect to the Holocaust, many social psychologists regarded the Obedience studies as evidence of the power of situations in determining actions.[117] Participants did not want to inflict all the shocks, but manipulative, external situational forces saw most of them act in ways contrary to their internal dispositions not to hurt an innocent person. According to Saltzman, Milgram was "the first psychologist to propose a situational theory of perpetrator behavior."[118] Even so, as Blass points out, Milgram's "situational approach does not provide a wholly adequate account" of the Holocaust due to the likely important role

played by the hostility individual Nazi perpetrators harbored for their victims.[119] In the wake of findings by Naumann, and then Browning, in his 1992 book *Ordinary Men*, Blass became convinced that although the Obedience studies could account for the "dutiful destructiveness" perpetrated by Nazi bureaucrats who transported Jews to concentration camps like inanimate objects, "it falls short when it comes to explaining the more zealous hate-driven cruelties that also defined the Holocaust."[120] Of course, had Milgram run the Propaganda condition, he would have tested the influence of dispositional forces on completion rates, taking, to some degree, this variable into consideration. However, had this condition obtained a low to medium completion rate, he would have complicated or even undermined his situational theory of perpetrator behavior, and perhaps lost the chance to be the "first" to propose such a theory. Perhaps it was for this reason that, during the pilot studies, he decided not to run it.[121] As an aside, in 1975 Bandura, Underwood, and Fromson undertook a shock-aggression-type experiment (interestingly published in the *Journal of Research in Personality*) where, in the presence of the harm-inflictors, the victim was dehumanized through subtle yet purposefully inserted disparaging remarks. The study concluded that "dehumanization is especially conducive to aggression when people have a reduced sense of responsibility for the consequences of their actions."[122] But this experiment was not a replication of Milgram's experiment so critics could argue that its findings are inapplicable to the Obedience studies.

If Blass questioned the Milgram-Holocaust linkage, Goldhagen's 1996 "extremely dispositional" *Hitler's Willing Executioners*,[123] which provides a litany of examples of ordinary Germans zealously inflicting hate-driven cruelties on Jews, signals a complete changing of the tide. Capitalizing on a massive gap in the largely situational literature, Goldhagen paints a different picture of the Holocaust where ordinary perpetrators appear far from the "indifferent" and "passive" functionaries offered by the conventional explanations (including Milgram's). After providing numerous examples of ordinary Germans volunteering to do cruel and sadistic things to Jews, Goldhagen presents what Zangwill describes as "his best card"[124]—some of the "ordinary" perpetrators went so far as to disobey SS-Reichsführer Himmler's direct orders to stop killing.

On the [Helmbrecht death] march's second day, an SS lieutenant, who was a courier from Himmler, found their column and communicated…a directive from Himmler regarding the prisoners […] Himmler had *expressly forbidden* that any more Jews be killed…but to release them in the woods…[but the march and the killing continued and, therefore,] their killing and cruelty was…in violation of their duty. These Germans chose, against orders, authority, and all reason, to act as they did. (Italics original)[125]

On top of voluntarism and acts of gratuitous cruelty, this example illustrates that there was much more to the Holocaust than Milgram's "ordinary people, simply doing their jobs…without any particular hostility on their part…"[126] Unlike other prominent Holocaust scholars, Goldhagen dismisses Milgram's research:

Arguments holding that Germans inflexibly obey authority—namely that they reflexively obey any order, regardless of its content—are untenable. By extension, so are the claims by Stanley Milgram and many others that humans in general are blindly obedient to authority. All 'obedience', all 'crimes of obedience'…depend upon the existence of a propitious social and political context, in which the actors deem the authority to issue commands legitimate and the commands themselves not to be a gross transgression of sacred values and the overarching moral order.[127]

Because Sabini and Silver, followed by Bauman, supported the Milgram-Holocaust linkage, Goldhagen's criticisms apply equally to them.

Goldhagen's challenge to Milgram was soon taken up in the psychology literature. After the publication of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, there appeared several articles by psychologists challenging the Milgram-Holocaust linkage.[128] Gonen critiqued both Milgram and Hilberg, when he argued, "People do not gas other people, young and old, or shoot them or smash their skulls out of mere obedience to orders. People do not engage in wholesale murder out of administrative momentum, or in retail killing out of bureaucratic inertia."[129] Yet, the vast majority of leading Holocaust scholars rejected Goldhagen's theory of exterminationist antisemitism. Most agreed that German society was only moderately antisemitic, and thus, for some psychologists, the pendulum post-Goldhagen had perhaps swung too far in favor of dispositionist over situationist explanations of the Holocaust.

Having long ago been critical of the tendency of academics to engage in "count-'em mechanics," Mook argued, "Ultimately, what makes research findings of interest is that they help us understand everyday life. That *understanding, however, comes from theory* or the analysis of mechanism; it is not a matter of 'generalizing' the findings themselves" (italics added).[130] However, the theory Milgram provided in 1974 to explain his findings—the agentic state—failed to convince the academic community.[131] The agentic state could not explain the variance in completion rates across Milgram's different conditions.[132] Furthermore, Mantell and Panzarella note that in their replications of the Obedience studies, some participants held themselves primarily responsible for inflicting every shock.[133] Milgram himself noted that 36.3% of his participants felt the same way,[134] just like, as Mantell and Panzarella also note, some Nazi perpetrators later held themselves primarily responsible for their actions.[135] In both the social psychology laboratory and in the Nazi concentration camps, Mantell and Panzarella concluded, "A monolithic view of the obedient person as a purely passive agent who invariably relinquishes personal responsibility is a false view."[136] Participants were not thoughtless tools like a hammer controlled by a carpenter. Again, as Hilberg said, the "bureaucrat drives the wheel." In consequence of these and other criticisms, the theoretical component of Milgram's book is widely regarded as its "weakest" section.[137]

Given the gathering momentum against the Milgram-Holocaust linkage at the turn of the millennium, even Miller significantly tempered his earlier conclusions. Although he firmly maintains that "the experiments certainly generalize to those persons in Nazi Germany who obeyed orders, despite having personal reservations about what was happening to the Jews," he concedes in 2004 that in light of "what Goldhagen terms eliminationist, anti-Semitic beliefs," any Milgram-Holocaust linkage that fails to include the role of dehumanization is inadequate. "Anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany is simply too compelling a reality to dismiss as crucial simply because Milgram demonstrated that prejudice on the part of obedient persons was not necessary to obtain extreme harm-doing."[138]

Had Milgram run the Propaganda condition, and had this variation obtained a completion rate greater than the New Baseline's 65%, the content, controversy, and direction of the Milgram-Holocaust debate would likely have taken a different course. In its absence, however, Miller's views began to converge with those of Blass. As Parker stated,

"It's odd to hear Arthur G. Miller—one of the world's leading Milgram scholars—acknowledge that there have been times when he has wondered, just for a moment, if the experiments perhaps mean nothing at all."[139] Even John Sabini retreated to a more dispositional perspective.[140]

The present consensus on the Milgram-Holocaust linkage seems to be that, in Miller's words, obedience to authority "should be given a qualified causal significance in the Holocaust,"[141] and sense-of-duty "should be placed in the context of the crucial importance of many other factors," including, for example, the perpetrators' dehumanization of the Jews and their many other victims, their voluntarism, and their acts of sadism and cruelty.[142] It is probably fair to say that, in terms of the larger picture that has emerged, Milgram's Obedience studies have at best been relegated to a minor explanation of the Holocaust.[143] How did someone of Milgram's intellectual and creative caliber get so much wrong in the interpretation of his own experiments?

"Obedience"—Or Not?

If there was one issue that Milgram was confident about, it was that his experiments were, *in some important way*, about "obedience." The word "obedience" appears in the title of nearly all his articles. He made a film called *Obedience (A Filmed Experiment)*, he titled his book *Obedience to Authority*, and he introduced the theoretical account of his results—the agentic state—as "The Process of Obedience…"[144] So why did Milgram hold such an unshakable belief that his experiments were an investigation into "obedience to authority?" The answer is found not in the results but in the invention of the experiments.

Inspired by Nazi war crimes trials, Milgram set out to invent a social psychology experiment that would test the ordinary German perpetrators' defense of "just following orders." His experiment would determine if indeed ordinary (in this case American) people would follow orders to hurt an innocent person. The first pilots were a watershed moment for Milgram because, to his astonishment, at least part of the stereotype about the propensity of ordinary Germans to obey authority figures was confirmed: there indeed appeared to be a proclivity in most ordinary people to obey. And when Milgram later asked those who completed his experiment why they did and what they did, they typically claimed that they were just following orders. Furthermore, according to Milgram, his "obedient" participants were adamant that they honestly

did not believe they were "responsible for" their "own actions…"[145] Instead, they saw themselves as instruments "carrying out the wishes" of a higher authority.[146] For Milgram, his compliant participants and the Nazi perpetrators seemed to be influenced by the same agentic-like psychological process! After all, hadn't Rudolf Höss, the Commandant of Auschwitz, argued that "The Reich Security Head Office and the concentration camps were only the tools that were used to carry out the wishes of Himmler, or the intentions of Adolf Hitler."[147] With this discovery, the lens through which Milgram viewed his research hardened: his experiments *were*, in some important way, about obedience. With this belief locked firmly in mind, he embarked on the first official experiments and all their variations.

Others, however, have questioned Milgram's convictions. Noting how the experimenter had to urge one participant at least four times to "please continue" between the 285- and 315-volt switches, Charles Helm and Mario Morelli observed that "The 'obedient' behaviour that Milgram has analysed seems heavily dependent on cajoling, pleading, and repetition, set in the context of deception and personal surveillance."[148] At best, the end result of the interaction between participant and experimenter—the fulfillment of a request—only loosely fits the dictionary definition of obedience—"compliance with an order, request, or law or submission to another's authority."[149] All the cajoling, pleading, and repetition suggest that something far more nuanced was going on, such as, "complying with a request, being persuaded by an argument, or capitulating to pressure and intimidation."[150] These possibilities, however, seldom crossed Milgram's mind,[151] because the findings from his first pilot studies had so forcefully confirmed for him what the Nazis had said in court. But as one prosecutor of German war crimes suggested to journalist Gitta Sereny, obeying orders was probably a convenient and attractive excuse[152]—the so-called obedience alibi.[153] Such excuses—what De Swaan terms "expedient masquerade[s]"[154]—are frequently used during war crimes trials by perpetrators keen to evade personal responsibility for actions actually motivated by factors like greed, careerism, ambition, racism, hatred, and so on.[155] Consider, for example, Dieter Wisliceny who after the war testified that his superior officer, Adolf Eichmann, boasted near the end of the war that he would "leap laughing into the grave with extraordinary satisfaction at the knowledge that

he had helped to exterminate five million Jews."[156] However, once the state of Israel tracked him down, Eichmann's tune rather conveniently changed. He pleaded with his captors, "I was not a responsible leader," and that, "There is a need to draw a line between the leaders responsible and the people like me forced to serve as mere instruments in the hands of the leaders."[157] Blinded by confirmation bias, Milgram failed to consider that during his post-experimental interrogations, the "obedient" participants may have employed the same evasive strategy to avoid taking personal responsibility for their own actions.

Other researchers have questioned Milgram's use of the term "obedience." For example, in the mid-1990s Neil Lutsky argued that Milgram's frequent conflation of *description* and *explanation* leads to a tautological in which obedience is explained by obedience.[158] More recently, several researchers have likewise noted that "obedience" offers a weak description of most participants' behavior.[159] If "obedience" proves at best, a weak *description* of many participants' actions, it would make a flimsy foundation for a robust theoretical explanation of Milgram's results.[160] Perhaps this is the origin of the theoretical drought that has plagued Milgram's research and thus why, as Miller notes, nobody has proven capable of developing a "conclusive theory to account for destructive obedience—or defiance, either."[161] But perhaps the most telling criticism of Milgram's terminology came out of Burger's partial replication of the Obedience studies in 2009. During this replication, Burger, Girgis, and Manning noted that the fourth standard prod—"You have no other choice, you must go on"—infuriated participants so much that every single one of them exposed to it refused to continue.[162] Of all the prods, this one most resembles a demand to obey authority, but in fact, it stimulated *disobedience* 100% of the time. Perhaps, then, the experiments were not about "obedience to authority" at all.

Helm and Morelli write:

> The attempt to clarify the legal and philosophic aspects of obedience involves the establishment of criteria that must "be met before an event or act can be said to fall within the ambit of a given concept". In the absence of a clarification of such criteria, we have no good grounds for contending that this instance of a belief or behavior is illustrative of obedience to authority.[163]

These two researchers compared Milgram's failure to question his assumptions to those of King Charles II's philosophers, who, when asked by the king why a fish gains weight after dying, eagerly offered a welter of theories until Charles pointed out that a fish does not gain weight after death. According to Russell and Gregory,

> none of the philosophers in the metaphorical court of "King Stanley" seriously challenged an assumption that was, because of his pilot studies, so firmly held by the king himself. Convinced from the outset that his experiments were somehow about "obedience", Milgram eventually had to develop a theory that, metaphorically speaking, explained why a fish gains weight when it expires. Perhaps this is why he took well over a decade of deep and often depressing contemplation to develop a theory that so quickly ended up dead in the water.[164]

The reason that Milgram believed his "obedient" participants were telling the truth was:

> For a man to feel responsible for his actions, he must sense that the behavior has flowed from 'the self.' In the situation we have studied, subjects have precisely the opposite *view* of their actions—namely, they see them as originating in the motives of some other person. Subjects in the experiment frequently said, 'If it were up to me, I would not have administered shocks to the learner'. (Italics added)[165]

If Milgram's participants were telling the truth, then, he concluded, the Nazi perpetrators must also have been telling the truth when they expressed the same personal "view." For many Nazi war criminals during the 1940s and 1950s, however, their lives and reputations were on the line—being executed was possible, serving prison time was probable, and the prospect of being labeled a war criminal was almost certain. For the Nazi perpetrators, there was obviously a great deal to be gained from denial and evasion.[166] It would seem that Milgram failed to consider the possibility that his "obedient" participants utilized the same evasive strategy as the Nazi war criminals to veil what were their own (perhaps shameful) reasons for inflicting harm. Both during and immediately after the experiments, lies were likely told— lies that Milgram believed to be the truth. It would therefore seem that the great deceiver of psychology may ironically have been a victim of his own participants' acts of deception.[167] Somewhat excitingly, this deception provides a new lens through which to theoretically view the Obedience studies.

CONCLUSION

The ethical debate over whether or not Milgram should have run the Obedience studies remains unresolved and probably irresolvable, since any assessment of the ethics of the research must rest on subjective opinions of what constitutes valuable knowledge. Less ambiguous is Milgram's treatment of his participants, which was at best disconcerting and no doubt reckless, and also probably damaging. Yet, numerous independent replications and variations conducted in different nations, at different times, and on different types of victims, all suggest that the Obedience research program was in all likelihood internally valid. Even so, generalizing Milgram's findings and his agentic state theory to the Holocaust largely has proven unsuccessful. From the start, Milgram's understanding of his own experiment was flawed, and therefore he constructed his theoretical musings on shaky ground.

Despite these failings, the Obedience studies continue to attract a phenomenal amount of scholarly and popular attention. It would seem that many people intuit something profoundly disconcerting about them, and even today, half-a-century later, they continue to touch a nerve. As Lauren Slater correctly notes, "Milgram's experiments are indisputably in the canon," however explaining exactly why it is difficult. As she rather poetically puts it, "What message has Milgram sent us, in what sort of bottle, on which sea?"[168] Lest we conclude, however, that we have traveled such a long journey only to arrive at a dead-end, I contend that the shortcomings of Milgram's own theories afford an exciting opportunity: to develop a more convincing explanation of the Obedience studies and their link to the Holocaust.

NOTES

1. Milgram (1964).
2. Miller (2004, p. 203).
3. Baumrind (2013, 2015), Brannigan et al. (2015), Herrera (2001), Kaufmann (1967), Kelman (1972), Milgram (1977), Miller (1986), Perry (2012), and Schuler (1982).
4. McGaha and Korn (1995, p. 147).
5. Baumrind (1964) and Kelman (1972).
6. Milgram (1963, p. 377).
7. Baumrind (1964, p. 423).
8. Schuler (1982, p. 125).

9. Baumrind (1964, p. 422).
10. Milgram (1964, p. 849).
11. Blass (2004, pp. 124–125).
12. In a document titled "Interviews with Forty 'Worst Cases' in the Milgram Obedience Experiments," dated 20 June 1963, Paul Errera, an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, states, "Single 50 minute interviews were held…some twelve months after the termination of the study […] None were found by this interviewer to show signs of having been harmed by their experience" (SMP, Box 45, Folder 162). Perry questions whether these were the forty worst cases because her archival research revealed that Milgram actually invited 140 out of 780 participants for assessments, but only 32 (not 40) showed up (2012, pp. 252, 261). The disparity between 32 and Milgram's preferred figure of 40 caused a rift between Errera and himself (p. 261). Another source of tension was that Milgram also failed to disclose to Errera how the 140 potential interviewees were selected (were they really the worst 140 cases or just a random selection?) (p. 261). Either way, based on the title of Errera's report, the forceful Milgram obviously got his way.
13. Miller (1986, p. 96).
14. SMP, Box 45, Folder 159.
15. Perry (2012, p. 92).
16. SMP, Box 44, Divider "12", #0625.
17. SMP, Box 44, Divider "9", #0716. Some participants were critical of Milgram's post-experimental revelation that not all participants were dehoaxed. One argued, "From what I've learned from others who've taken part, it would seem you have been somewhat irresponsible in permitting disturbed subjects to leave without informing them that they didn't half kill the shockee [*sic*]" (SMP, Box 44, Divider (no label), #1137).
18. SMP, Box 155, Audiotape # 0303.
19. Perry (2015, pp. 630–631).
20. Quoted in Blass (2004, p. 72).
21. As Milgram said in his research proposal dated 25 January 1961: "Every effort will be made to set the subject at ease. […] An extended discussion with the experimenter, and a friendly reconciliation with the confederates will be an integral part of each subject's experience. In time all interested subjects will be informed of the full details of the experimental program." Immediately after this, Milgram stated: "Beyond this, *no rigid rules are possible*: each subject must be treated individually, but always with the respect due to one who has aided in scientific inquiry (Italics added)" (SMP, Box 45, Folder 160).
22. Perry (2012, pp. 94, 236).

23. Perry (2012, pp. 238–240, 251–253).
24. Milgram (1964, p. 849).
25. Quoted in Meyer (1970, p. 132).
26. Schlenker and Forsyth (1977, p. 373).
27. Bok (1978, as cited in Pigden and Gillet, 1996, p. 243), Kelman (1972, p. 167), and Perry (2012).
28. Perry (2012, pp. 109–113, 119–127).
29. Quoted in Perry (2012, p. 112).
30. Perry (2012, pp. 126–131).
31. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2429.
32. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2422, #2428, #2435, respectively.
33. See Perry (2012, pp. 201–202) and Russell (2014, pp. 197–200). It is possible that Milgram never published the Relationship condition because of its shaky methodology. Detracting from the likelihood of this possibility, however, is Milgram's admission that the Relationship condition "was surprisingly workable" (SMP, Box 70, Folder 289).
34. SMP, Box 44, Divider "9", #2013.
35. SMP, Box 44, Divider "9", #0116.
36. Milgram (1974, p. 54), SMP, Box 44, Divider "12", #0328, and SMP, Box 44, Divider "10", #0222.
37. SMP, Box 44, Divider "8", #1311. See also Mantell and Panzarella (1976, p. 241) and Milgram (1964, p. 850).
38. Kaufmann (1967, p. 322).
39. Kelman (1972, pp. 167–168).
40. Elms (1972, p. 156).
41. Pigden and Gillet (1996, p. 244).
42. Blass (2004, p. 117).
43. SMP, Box 44, Divider "12", #2032.
44. Quoted in Blass (2004, p. 117).
45. See Blass (2012, p. 197).
46. Miller (1986, pp. 104–105).
47. Miller (2004, p. 198).
48. Miller (1986, p. 104). See also Kelman (1972).
49. SMP, Box 46, Folder 165 (dated "January 1962").
50. SMP, Box 62, Folder 126.
51. As Herbert Winer said of his personal conversations with Milgram about the Obedience studies: "He was Jewish, I was Jewish. It drove his research" (quoted in Perry 2012, p. 128).
52. Baumrind (1964).
53. Baumrind (1964, pp. 422–423).
54. Baumrind (1964, p. 421).
55. Milgram (1964).

56. Miller (1986, pp. 115, 104–105). The dispute between Milgram and many of those who challenged the Obedience studies on ethical grounds comes back to an irresolvable and complex philosophical debate between *teleologists* (whose focus is, as Milgram's was, on the potentially beneficial consequences of a research project) and *deontologists* (who believe that it is totally unethical to use any means—like deception or the infliction of stress/conflict—as a vehicle to arrive at a worthy scientific end). As Schlenker and Forsyth (1977) point out, "Whenever a teleologist and a deontologist discuss morals, there will be an inevitable value conflict. The fundamental moral guide for the teleologist is the test of consequences, a consideration that the deontologist cannot abide" (p. 373).

57. Laud Humphreys' (1970) ethnographic research was criticized on ethical grounds because, while observing his participants, he failed to reveal he was actually a researcher and instead masqueraded as a voyeur. He also recorded the vehicle license plates of his less cooperative participants with the intention of later identifying them for a follow-up interview. During these follow-up interviews, Humphreys disguised himself as a health service interviewer and then attempted to obtain personal demographic information, including marital status. Although unethical, some of his research findings conflicted with then common American stereotypes, including the surprising revelation that more than half of the participants were married and still living with their wives. See http://web.missouri.edu/~bondesonw/Laud.html. Accessed 25 February 2015.

58. Miller (1986, p. 136).

59. Eckman (1977, p. 94), Miller (1995, p. 34), and Orne and Holland (1968, p. 282).

60. Milgram (1972, p. 139).

61. Orne and Holland (1968, p. 287).

62. Orne (1962, p. 779).

63. Milgram (1972, p. 141).

64. After undertaking a replication of the Obedience experiment, David Rosenhan had independent judges interview participants, asking them in astonishment, "You really mean you didn't catch on to the experiment?" Seventy percent admitted to having been fooled by the deception (Milgram 1972, p. 141; see also Meeus and Raaijmakers 1985, as cited in Miller 1986, p. 156).

65. Eckman (1977, p. 94).

66. Milgram (1972, p. 140).

67. See, for example, Milgram (1974, p. 57). More specifically, consider the following post-experimental exchange: Experimenter: "How painful to the learner were the last few shocks that you administered to

him…?" Participant: "From his reaction I would say…extremely pain-ful…" Experimenter: "Well…how…high a sample shock would you take on this machine right now?" Participant: "I would like to say [laughs] cautious me, alright, I'd go up to…60 [volts]. I've had 10,000 volts but [laughs] it felt different to [the earlier 45-volt test shock]" (SMP, Box 155, Audiotape #0303). Also, in Rosenhan's replication of the Obedience studies, every participant later refused to participate in another trial, but this time in the learner's role (1969, p. 142; see also Mantell 1971, p. 108).

68. Milgram (1974, p. 159).
69. See, for example, Perry (2012, p. 197).
70. See, for example, Russell (2009, pp. 152–153).
71. Eckman (1977, p. 95). In fact, Milgram's procedure was so convincing that one participant had even been informed by a friend who had earlier been a participant "that the experiment was 'a fake, the learner does not get any shocks' but I didn't believe this" (SMP, Box 44, Divider "8", #1014).
72. Harré (1979, p. 105). As De Swaan (2015, p. 28) most recently argued, "Nobody in their right mind would ever accept the idea that someone, anyone, would be electrocuted in the presence of certified researchers in the psychology lab on the campus of Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut." At best, De Swaan suspects participants perceived the Obedience experiments as "a very serious game" (p. 29).
73. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2430. See also SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2429 and Perry (2012, p. 161).
74. See, for example, Perry (2012, pp. 69–72).
75. Mixon (1976, p. 93).
76. Mixon (1989, p. 33).
77. Mixon (1989, p. 35).
78. Mixon (1976, p. 95). Mixon fails to clarify why he believes these three particular experiments were the least ambiguous variations. I suspect the Touch-Proximity condition—the learner could be heard, seen and even-tually had to be touched—was probably the least ambiguous variation. This condition, however, generated a 30% completion rate.
79. Mixon (1976, pp. 92–94).
80. Mixon (1972, p. 164). In this series of experiments, the participant was provided with an overview of the Remote experiment up until the 300-volt switch was inflicted. The participant was then to imagine and describe the succeeding events. By manipulating this description, Mixon obtained wide variations in predicted completion rates. When the descriptions conveyed the learner was being harmed, predicted completions slumped. However, ambiguous descriptions resulted

in high predicted completion rates. "I used nonactive role playing scripts of Milgram's study to check my assumption that if I described the experimenter in the 'learning study' behaving as if he believed the learner is being seriously harmed, participants would refuse to obey his commands. The series of scripts supported my assumption; the script that made it most clear that the experimenter believed the consequences harmful elicited no obedience (Mixon 1972)" (Mixon 1976, pp. 94–95). Of course, the most obvious methodological weakness of role-playing is that although it enables the researcher to avoid having to deceive the participant, it rather ironically increases the probability of demand characteristics influencing the results (Miller 1986, p. 175).

81. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2439.
82. SMP, Box 44, Divider (no label, #1106). Another participant noted that although he "wasn't sure he [the learner] was getting the shocks," when "he stared to complain vigorously…I refused to go on" (SMP, Box 44, Divider "8", #1818).
83. Perry (2012, p. 135).
84. Russell (2014).
85. Quoted in Perry (2012, p. 359).
86. Coutts (1977, p. 520, as cited in Darley 1995, p. 133).
87. Russell (2014).
88. Russell (2014).
89. Perry (2012, pp. 134–135).
90. Perry (2012, p. 134).
91. Perry (2012, p. 134). See also Gibson (2013a, b). This strong criticism renders problematic all attempts—as I admittedly did earlier in this book—at making comparisons between different variations.
92. See, for example, Blass (2012).
93. Foddy (1971), Penner et al. (1973), Shanab and Yahya (1977), and Sheridan and King (1972).
94. Beauvois et al. (2012) and Hofling et al. (1966). The second study—in which doctors ordered nurses to administer to patients lethal dosages of medicine—was undertaken independently of the Obedience studies. Nonetheless, as a real-life setting, it arguably lends weight to the credibility of the Obedience studies.
95. Ancona and Pareyson (1968), Burley and McGuinness (1977), Doliński et al. (2017), Edwards et al. (1969), Gupta (1983), Kilham and Mann (1974), Mantell (1971), Miranda et al. (1981), Schurz (1985), and Shanab and Yahya (1978).
96. Bocchiaro and Zimbardo (2010), Burger (2009), Costanzo (1977), Geller (1976), Kilham and Mann (1974), Martin et al. (1976), Meeus and Raaijmakers (1986, 1995), Rosenhan (1969), and Shelton (1982).

97. Miller et al. (1995, pp. 11–12).
98. Miller et al. (1995, p. 12).
99. Mook (1983, p. 386).
100. Baumrind (1964, p. 423).
101. Milgram (1964, p. 851).
102. See, for example, Blass (2004, pp. 269–270).
103. Askenasy (1978, pp. 131–132), Berger (1983, p. 28), Charny (1982, pp. 13–16), Dicks (1972, p. 269), Etzioni (1968, p. 280), Kelman and Hamilton (1989, pp. 23–34), Rosenbaum (1983, p. 36), and Steiner (1980, p. 431). Others, however, opposed the connection, including Fromm (1973, p. 51), Miale and Selzer (1975, pp. 7–13), Patten (1977, p. 438), and Tedeschi et al. (1985, pp. 211–212).
104. Sabini and Silver (1982, p. 56).
105. Sabini and Silver (1982, p. 60).
106. Sabini and Silver (1982, p. 60).
107. Sabini and Silver (1982, p. 70). See also Hilberg (1961b).
108. See also Kelman and Hamilton (1989, pp. 23–34).
109. With his work still controversial, Milgram died of a heart attack in New York City on 20 December 1984. He was 51 years old.
110. Miller (1986, pp. 257–258).
111. Brief et al. (1995), Hamilton and Sanders (1995), Hamilton and Sanders (1999), Kelman and Hamilton (1989), and Luban et al. (1992).
112. Blass (2004, pp. 264–265).
113. Miller (2004, pp. 199–200).
114. Bauman (1989).
115. See, for example, Lawson (2010, p. 148) and especially Roth (2004, pp. 216–225).
116. Blass (1993, p. 35).
117. Berkowitz (1999, p. 247), Blass (1991, p. 399), and Blass (1993, p. 31).
118. Saltzman (2000, p. 140).
119. Blass (1993, p. 37).
120. Blass (1993, p. 37).
121. As Elms (1995) said, "Though he [Milgram] had collected demographic information on all participants and had supported my collection of personality data from subsamples of obedient and disobedient subjects (Elms & Milgram, 1965 [*sic*]), he gave short shrift to such data in his book, concluding that 'It is hard to relate performance to personality because we really do not know very much about how to measure personality' (p. 205)" (pp. 28–29). After having obtained fascinating results using only situational forces, Milgram could nonetheless speculate about the kinds of results he would have obtained if he did try to stimulate dispositional forces. "In all likelihood, our subjects would

have experienced greater ease in shocking the victim had he been convincingly portrayed as a brutal criminal or a pervert." On these speculative grounds, Milgram decided he did not need to run the condition (1974, pp. 9–10). Surely, however, Milgram came to regret his decision given that the Obedience studies could not provide a better understanding of the Holocaust without it (see Baumrind 1964, p. 423).

122. Bandura et al. (1975, p. 266). They also found that humanizing comments had the opposite effect.
123. Miller (2004, p. 226).
124. Zangwill (2003, p. 98).
125. Goldhagen (1996, pp. 356–357). This example was not the first to come to light in Holocaust research. Hilberg (1961b) and Bartov [1986] (2001, pp. 109, 118) present similar examples of Germans disobeying orders to stop killing.
126. Milgram (1974, p. 6).
127. Goldhagen (1996, p. 383). Both Hilberg (1980, pp. 98–101) and Browning (1992, pp. 173–174) identified limitations with the Milgram-Holocaust linkage, but neither dismissed the possibility of a connection.
128. Berkowitz (1999), Fenigstein (1998a, b), and Mastroianni (2002).
129. Gonen (2000, p. 192).
130. Mook (1983, p. 386).
131. Darley (1992, pp. 206–207), Marcus (1974, p. 2), Miller (2004, p. 210), and Russell and Gregory (2005, pp. 340–341).
132. Blass (2004, p. 216).
133. Mantell and Panzarella (1976, p. 242).
134. Milgram (1974, p. 203).
135. Mantell and Panzarella (1976, p. 245).
136. Mantell and Panzarella (1976, p. 242). See also Bandura (1999, p. 197), Lutsky (1995, p. 59), and Waller (2002, p. 126).
137. Blass (2004, p. 216).
138. Miller (2004, p. 234).
139. Parker (2000, p. 121).
140. See, for example, Sabini et al. (2001a, b).
141. Miller (2004, p. 220). See also Lutsky (1995), Staub (1989), and Waller (2002).
142. Miller (2004, p. 220).
143. Fenigstein (1998b, p. 71; 2015, p. 594) and Lutsky (1995, pp. 62–63).
144. Milgram (1974, p. 135).
145. Milgram (1974, p. 134).
146. Milgram (1974, p. 134).
147. Höss (2001, p. 178).
148. Helm and Morelli (1985, p. 618).

149. Concise Oxford English Dictionary (2002), 10th ed., Revised.
150. Morelli (1983, p. 185).
151. On at least one occasion Milgram wondered if "cooperation" might be a better term than "obedience" (see Haslam et al. 2016, p. 7).
152. Sereny (2000, pp. 79–81).
153. Mandel (1998, p. 74). See also Fenigstein (2015, pp. 589, 591).
154. De Swaan (2015, p. 22).
155. As De Swaan (2015, p. 21) argues, when perpetrators are later put on trial for their crimes, they typically avoid conveying "[s]trong motivations"—like racial or ethnic hatred, wild ambition, and uncompromising ideological convictions— that "might betray a personal commitment to their murderous task and bring their individual responsibility to the fore."
156. Lippman (1982, p. 5).
157. See http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/27/eichmann-claimed-he-was-a-mere-instrument-in-holocaust-appeal-reveals. Accessed 28 August 2017.
158. Lutsky (1995, p. 58).
159. Brannigan (2013), Gibson (2014), Kaposi (2017), Perry (2012, p. 289), Reicher and Haslam (2011), Russell (2009), and Russell and Gregory (2011).
160. Russell and Gregory (2011, p. 497).
161. Miller (2004, p. 233).
162. Burger et al. (2011, p. 464).
163. Helm and Morelli (1979, p. 325).
164. Russell and Gregory (2015, pp. 132–133).
165. Milgram (1974, p. 146).
166. See, for example, Earl (2009).
167. In their methodological critique of the Obedience studies, Orne and Holland (1968, p. 285) were clearly right about one thing: "When such an experiment is carried out…it is vital that the investigator determine whether it is the S[ubject] or himself [*sic*] who is being deceived!"
168. Slater (2004, p. 61).

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A New Theoretical Path: The Emergence of Milgram's Bureaucratic Machine

Throughout his experimental program, Milgram focused his attention on the "obedient" participants' actions—why did they complete? But, some scholars like Rom Harré have wondered why Milgram's research team never raised objections to the near "nervous collapse" they inflicted on innocent people:

> Milgram's assistants were quite prepared to subject the participants in the experiment to mental anguish, and in some cases considerable suffering, in obedience to Milgram. The most morally obnoxious feature of this outrageous experiment was, I believe, the failure of any of Milgram's assistants to protest against the treatment that they were meting out to the subjects.[1]

As early as March 1962, Milgram observed in his research notes a parallel between the participants' *seemingly* harmful actions and his research team's *actually* harmful ones,

> Consider, for example, the fact --and it is a fact indeed, that while observing the experiment I ---and many others-- know that the naive subject is deeply distressed, and that…[it] is almost nerve shattering in some instances. Yet, we do not stop the experiment because of this […] *If we fail to intervene, although we know a man is being made upset; why separate these actions of ours from those of the subject, who feels he is causing discomfort to another. And can we not use our own motives and reactions as a clue to*

what is behind the actions of the subject. The question to ask then is: why do we feel justified in carrying through the experiment, and why is this any different from the justifications that the obedient subject's feel? (Italics added)[2]

Here Milgram sensed something so ironic that the connection was surely beyond coincidence. Yet, perhaps blinded by his own confirmation bias, he never pursued this observation further.

Given the pitfalls already identified with Milgram's flawed view, the intention of this chapter is to explore his experiments through a different lens. This chapter will argue that to convert his research idea into reality, Milgram had to design, construct, then manage an organizational process capable of systematically and efficiently extracting data from nearly a thousand participants. More importantly, it will show that this organizational system—a goal-orientated, bureaucratic process that unobtrusively lay hidden behind the participants' actions—played a necessary structural role in the production of the New Baseline experiment's high completion rate. The evidence presented here will show that what is most revealing about the Obedience studies is not necessarily the official results, but the experiment's organizational structure, which played a powerful role in their generation.

The Construction of Milgram's Bureaucratic Machine

As mentioned already, Milgram had two main research goals. The first was to create a realistic baseline experiment in which most participants would implement "orders" to act "aggressively toward another person." In the first baseline experiment Milgram aimed to "maximize obedience" by creating what he termed "the strongest obedience situation." The second and more official research goal was to undertake a variety of ad hoc variations on the original procedure in an attempt to unravel why most participants in the baseline experiment chose to inflict every shock. Milgram hoped these variations would, through a gradual process of elimination, enable him to understand why so many people completed the New Baseline experiment.

However, converting his rudimentary pilot studies into a professional research program was a mammoth organizational task that necessitated his drawing on the help, expertise, and resources of many people. To run an official research program, Milgram needed professional laboratory facilities, financial backing, specialist technical equipment, and numerous technicians, research assistants, actors, and administrative personnel.

It is fair to say that converting the pilot project into an official research program was a massive logistical undertaking. To have any chance of achieving his goals and completing the research program, Milgram had to design a meticulous and well-coordinated organizational system in which every one of his helpers sequentially and, if necessary, repetitively performed their specialized tasks over a period of many months. The system had to be capable of accurately and efficiently extracting a large amount of data from an equally large number of participants.

Putting this massive organizational task aside, another perhaps even more imposing hurdle threatened the achievement of Milgram's goals. As Milgram noted in the official research proposal, during the first pilot studies, "Many subjects show signs of extreme tension" when inflicting "extremely painful" shocks. An observer added that one participant was "pulling his hair, gripping his chair, and […] was extremely uneasy."[3] Milgram's helpers would have known in advance of the first official experiment that participants would be exposed to intense stress, and so they faced a moral dilemma: should they contribute to or resist such a harmful study. Milgram's successful achievement of the research goals was thus threatened by the possibility that some helpers might consider the experiments unethical and refuse to fulfill their essential organizational roles.

Somehow Milgram had to convince, persuade and, if necessary, coerce, not only his participants, but his helpers and collaborators, even his funders, into pursuing an experimental program they all knew to be harmful. To do so, Milgram turned again to a variety of strain resolving mechanisms to reduce the tension normally associated with inflicting harm, and powerful binding factors to tempt, entrap, or coerce them into fulfilling their roles. To better understand why Yale University, the National Science Foundation, and Milgram's own research assistants, technicians, and actors contributed to a harmful study, it is necessary to examine the strain resolving mechanisms and binding factors Milgram relied upon to draw each of them in. But first, Milgram had to ensure the collaboration of the most important specialist contributor of all— himself—the project manager.

Project Manager: Stanley Milgram

It is likely that Milgram pursued his official research program because, being Jewish and having followed the Nazi war crimes trials, he was sensitive to the possibility that the first pilot series appeared to capture

aspects of the Holocaust in the laboratory setting.[4] Milgram is also likely to have suspected that the research idea fitted his careerist ambition to pursue a "phenomenon of great consequence…"[5] But there was an issue of lingering concern. Milgram knew from the first pilots that running an official series of experiments would impose "extreme tension" on some participants. Nevertheless, he soon came to the conclusion that the experimental procedure was harmless,[6] and from then on never publicly expressed any moral reservations about the Obedience studies. Another of Milgram's strain resolving thoughts was that "obedient" participants might learn a strong moral lesson: to resist authoritarian pressure to do wrong.[7] In the tradition of moral inversion, by imposing "extreme tension" on participants, he was actually helping them. Having said this, he was convinced (at least outwardly) that any potential negative effects were benign, and that the results would be both profoundly important and personally rewarding. Milgram regarded his own research into destructive obedience as equal to the groundbreaking contributions of cancer and polio researchers who, like himself, aimed to protect society. Once Milgram decided to proceed, he needed to convince his superiors at Yale University to support his research proposal.

Institutional Support: Yale University

Yale University, whose motto is *Lux et veritas* (Light and Truth), is a leading research institution with an organizational objective that mirrors all universities: the pursuit and creation of knowledge. It is likely that this objective explains Yale administrators' ultimate support for Milgram's research. Yet, a letter dated 14 November 1963 (after all the data had been collected) from Milgram to Claude E. Buxton (chair of Yale's Department of Psychology) alludes to some initial doubts. In it, Milgram compliments Buxton for his foresight two years earlier when the latter had raised concerns about the first research proposal: "It was, indeed, perceptive of you," Milgram wrote, "to sense the [negative] public relations implication of the study [for Yale University] back in December 1960."[8] Assurances Milgram offered in the official research proposal, dated 25 January 1961, were likely intended to alleviate the concerns of administrators such as Buxton: "it is highly important," Milgram wrote, "that measures be taken to insure the subject's well being [*sic*] before he is discharged from the laboratory. Every effort will be made to set the subject at ease and to assure him of the adequacy of his performance."[9]

Buxton backed Milgram's research proposal, informing the Provost, Norman S. Buck, "I have read and approve of Mr. Milgram's application to the National Science Foundation and trust you will sign for the University and forward his application."[10] On the same day, Buck did as Buxton trusted of him and endorsed Milgram's lengthy research proposal.[11] The Department of Psychology faculty, it seems, was not consulted.[12]

Why did Buxton support such a potentially controversial research proposal and then encourage (push?) Buck to do the same? While I've found no evidence on this matter, it is possible to speculate that as chair of Yale University's ambitious Department of Psychology, Buxton was likely to have played a role in hiring the promising Milgram—a Harvard graduate appointed, along with other new tenure track recruits, because he possessed the competitive edge capable of raising the department's academic profile. And when Milgram applied for a large and prestigious research grant, Buxton would surely have felt it was in the department's interests to support it. Whatever the exact reason/s for Buxton's strong support of the Obedience study, and Buck's endorsement, most important was that Milgram made the necessary concessions required to get Yale onboard. With Milgram having secured the requisite institutional support, he then needed to obtain funding.

Funding Agency: The National Science Foundation

The motto of the National Science Foundation, a US government-sponsored funding agency is "where discoveries begin."[13] Its core organizational objective has long been to fund innovative research. Milgram's research proposal used key words and phrases that, given this objective, were likely to capture the research committee's attention: his experiment dealt in "a relatively unexplored domain of social behavior;" the "Pilot studies… yielded unexpected results of considerable interest;" independent observers had apparently found the pilot results "startling."[14] Milgram could have strengthened the attractiveness of his proposal by highlighting the pilot studies' basic resemblance to Nazi violence, but he never mentions the Holocaust in his application. Instead, he linked the Obedience studies to something of far greater salience to the federal government—Cold War anxieties. According to Nicholson, Milgram compared the pilot results to the machinations of the "Red Chinese in North Korean POW camps."[15] An impressed National Science Foundation described Milgram's research as "a bold experiment on an important and fundamental social phenomenon."[16]

Like Yale, however, the National Science Foundation expressed concern about participant safety. Sometime between 3 May and 13 July a committee meeting was held to decide if they would uphold their decision to fund Milgram.[17] The organization faced the moral dilemma of whether or not to financially support, and thereby become inextricably associated with, a harmful study. This dilemma appears to have been resolved by Milgram's strain resolving assurances in the research proposal that he would "insure the subject's well being [*sic*]."[18] Convinced by the experimental program's probable importance and reassured it would be harmless, the National Science Foundation informed Yale University on 13 July 1961 of their decision to fund the Obedience studies.[19] Now Milgram needed to assemble a research team.

Research Assistant: Alan Elms

Alan Elms, Milgram's first research assistant,[20] was convinced that the Obedience studies were of great scientific value because they, in some way, captured elements of Nazi violence.[21] His investment in the Nazi analogy meant, despite the infliction of intense stress, he believed running the studies was of great importance. If Elms was ever concerned about contributing to a harmful study, strain resolving steps Milgram took perhaps set his assistant's conscience at ease. Despite his apparently "Eichman[n]"-like role, Milgram informed the young graduate student he need not worry about funneling participants into a stressful experiment, because those who chose to side with evil over good really only had themselves to blame; a strain resolving mechanism more commonly termed "blaming the victim." Milgram's explicit declarations that the experiments were probably harmless also likely eased any concerns Elms might have felt.[22]

Elms himself has mentioned a variety of binding forces that contributed to his continued involvement in the research program.[23] These included the Department of Psychology's requirement that, as a graduate student, he secured a "faculty sponsor," pecuniary reward, and the draw of his own intellectual curiosity. One binding factor he did not mention was Milgram's offer to collaborate with him on future obedience-related publications.[24] And even if second thoughts ever entered Elms' head, with so much on offer, could he as a mere graduate student afford to subvert his professor's research agenda? With Elms onboard, Milgram now had to hire actors who would play the key roles of experimenter and learner.

Actors: The Experimenter and Learner

Should the need ever arise, Milgram could have replaced a staff member like Elms with another equally capable graduate student, substituting an old cog with a new one in his organizational machine. But, when it came to the acting staff, his replacement options were much more constrained. From a methodological perspective, the experiments required the same learner and experimenter throughout, lest a departure result in the introduction of potentially confounding variables to the controlled laboratory setting.[25] Milgram needed to retain these key members of his research team until the end of the study. Because, the learner, and especially the experimenter, were involved in the infliction of intense stress on innocent people, they were the helpers perhaps at the greatest risk of refusing to perform their essential roles in the program. For this reason Milgram needed to choose wisely.

They, like all helpers, needed to understand that inflicting intense stress was within what organizational theorist Chester Barnard famously termed their *Zone of Indifference*: "orders for actions" which fit within the functionary's range of "unquestionably acceptable."[26] More specifically, before proceeding the functionary decides that they "will accept orders lying within this zone and is relatively indifferent as to what the order is so far as the question of authority is concerned."[27] That is, after Milgram informed all his helpers of the experiments' great importance and then eased all of their initial concerns, his request that they undertake their specialist contributions ending in the infliction of intense stress became acceptable; acts that without question, they would implement.

Milgram began his search for a frontline experimenter on 26 July 1961 when he placed the following advertisement in the *New Haven Register*:

> ASSISTANT IN RESEARCH to supervise physcological [*sic*] experiments concerning memory and learning process. Age requirement 30 to 50 years., [*sic*] college education preferred but not necessary, evening hours and-or weekends—ideal for school teacher seeking additional employment. Please apply at Yale University personnel office, 143 Elm St., New Haven. m-S.[28]

Milgram chose John Williams for the position, a high school teacher with a young family, who was in need of extra income.[29] For the position of learner he chose James McDonough. Milgram's notes taken during his

interview with McDonough reflect the strong desire he had to select staff likely to remain until the end of the project. Milgram noted that James McDonough had worked loyally for the "Railroad [for] 25 years and is completely reliable," and was "willing to work for 1 year." Milgram also noted that because McDonough had "eight Children," he, like Williams, could presumably use the additional income.[30]

Although both Williams and McDonough were aware participants would experience intense stress—Williams said "we know a man is being made upset"[31]—both fulfilled their roles in part because of the program's purported importance. As Williams explained to one participant during a debriefing session, "we had to…set you up this way so to speak because…we want[ed] you to really think…you're really paining this guy…but we feel that the results from the experiments will be very important and actually be of tremendous value."[32] For Williams, this importance came from the experimental program's potential implications beyond the laboratory. As he said to another participant, "It's very similar to a situation a guy finds himself in the army."[33] Under the legitimating ideological banner of scientific inquiry, the experiments promised to uncover the causes of what Milgram termed the "disease" of "destructive obedience."[34] According to Fermaglich, Milgram "encouraged the people contributing to or participating with him in the experiment to view it as an analogue of Nazi evil."[35] Williams (and no doubt McDonough too) believed this "groundbreaking"[36] research "must be done."[37] Again, Milgram ensured that his requests that all helpers make their contributions toward the infliction of harm was within their *Zone of Indifference*—actions they would not question.

Milgram suspected, however, that morally inverting the experiments from something bad to something good would, on its own, fail to secure the acting duo's unyielding commitment. As he had with his other helpers, then, Milgram needed to bolster their commitment by anticipating, then appealing to, their personal needs or desires. The actors were unlikely to be moved, however, by the same forces that had appealed to Milgram himself, Yale University, the National Science Foundation, or Elms. Instead, Milgram suspected pecuniary reward would prove most effective in cementing the actors' loyalty, as indicated in his 14 February 1962 request to the National Science Foundation for additional funding.

Additional support is needed immediately to preserve the continuity of research. A tightly organized experimental team has been functioning effectively since August 1961.[…] Members of the team are adults who depend on the salaries they earn for family support. It would not be possible to hold this able group of workers together unless the work and salary payments were continuous.[38]

Raising the duo's hourly pay rate would, Milgram assumed, increase the effectiveness of this binding factor. So, on 1 March 1962, two weeks after sending the above request, Milgram offered McDonough and Williams their third pay increase in eight months.[39] He also relied on other remuneration strategies to better ensure the duo's loyalty. Between March and June 1962, Williams and McDonough received "Salary additions" of "$20" and "$25/mo[nth]."[40] And before the data collection phase came to an end, Milgram offered McDonough and Williams a one-off $100 cash bonus or a two percent cut of the eventual American book royalties. Both accepted the more immediate bonus.[41]

Although Williams told participants that collecting the data was "very important," and that the experiments "must be done," it was not necessary that he and the other helpers believe in Milgram's rationale for inflicting stress on innocent people. With so much to be gained, an opportunist—even one who personally suspected the experiments might be harmful or disputed their purported "tremendous value"—could still be enticed into participating. To do what they did, the helpers did not need to believe anything Milgram told them. For reasons of self-interest, they might continue to make their contributions.

Key, then, to Milgram's strategy to convincing his helpers into performing their specialist tasks was his application of a variety of convincing rationales that condoned the infliction of harm: the experiments were important and necessary, yet also harmless. Milgram also appealed to their needs and desires, financial, professional, and otherwise. Securing the contributions of every helper, whether an institution or an individual, depended on Milgram predicting then applying what he suspected might be the most successful motivational formula.[42] In reaching this conclusion, I do not mean to suggest that something underhanded took place. Rather, Milgram employed the kinds of "quid pro quos"—reciprocal back-scratching—that all project managers use to best ensure that team members work in a coordinated fashion toward the achievement of a preconceived organizational goal.[43] As Stefan Kühl observes in relation to the broader topic of organizational malevolence:

the motives driving people to participate…are of secondary importance. Organizations specializing in violence must naturally take into account that some of their members will fully identify with the [organizational] goal…, while some will be more neutral towards the goals of the organization and can be 'bought off' or 'compelled' to take part in actions considered reasonable by the organization, and some may be sceptical towards the specific actions expected of them. But all that matters to the organization in the end is that the actions it demands are actually carried out.[44]

As all of the key helpers agreed to do their bit, their decisions were influenced by an interactive string of binding factors and supplied strain resolving mechanisms. Once committed (as I will show) many bolstered their decisions by self-inventing additional strain resolving mechanisms. Thus, a common thread seems to have connected the basic thought processes of McDonough, Williams, Elms, the National Science Foundation committee, Buxton at Yale, and even Milgram himself. That is, armed with sometimes different rationalizations, all resolved the moral dilemma of whether or not to become involved in a harmful study in the affirmative. All became sufficiently convinced or, more opportunistically, tempted into making their essential specialist contributions.

This common cognitive thread is perhaps best reflected in the experimenter's persuasive and somewhat coercive prods, which Milgram himself could have relied on had any of his subordinate or superordinate helpers suddenly failed to play their part: "Please continue;" "The experiment requires that you continue;" "It is absolutely essential that you continue;" and, as a last resort, you have "no other choice, you must go on," otherwise *you* will be responsible for the program failing to achieve its (apparently) necessary goals. Even when a participant experienced near "nervous collapse," Milgram could reassure a hesitant helper that there would be no "permanent damage, so please go on." Had any of his helpers continued to express their concerns over the harming of innocent people, Milgram could settle the matter by stating, "I'm responsible for anything that happens to him. Continue, please."

THE STRAIN RESOLVING POWER OF THE BUREAUCRATIC PROCESS

One might suspect that Milgram and his helpers would have been sensitive to the slightest possibility of participants being seriously harmed in the experiments, especially when they weighed the devastating

implications of this risk against mere "scientific," personal, or organizational gains. However, something subtle yet powerful took place among Milgram and his helpers that was likely to have moderated such concerns and, simultaneously, cemented further their initial decisions to get and remain involved. By agreeing to participate, Milgram and his helpers all unwittingly become functionary links in a goal-directed, assembly line-like bureaucratic chain. This bureaucratic process had the power to mitigate any of Milgram and his helpers' initial or emerging concerns over participant safety and, at the same time to push them to continue making their specialist contributions to the overall process. Such organizational structures have both an inherently powerful strain resolving and coercive effect on those working within them. What follows first deals with the structural ability of bureaucracy to reduce residual strain and second reveals its intrinsically coercive effect.

As mentioned, an inherent characteristic of the bureaucratic process is the division of labor, where a goal-directed task (for example, the mass production and selling of cigarettes) is divided up among an array of specialist contributors—seed suppliers, tobacco farmers, harvesters, cigarette makers, marketers, upper management, wholesalers, and retailers, to name a few. The division of labor dictates that each specialized link in the chain of production can only contribute in part to goal achievement: maximizing profit from cigarette sales. For the specialist functionary, however, compartmentalization has the potential to circumvent awareness of any negative effects associated with goal achievement—for example, the strong positive correlation between smoking and cancer. This unawareness or diminished awareness can stimulate what Russell and Gregory term "responsibility ambiguity."[45] Responsibility ambiguity is basically broad confusion over who in an organization is totally, mostly, partially, or not at all responsible for a harmful end result. Thus, the divided organizational chain promotes a metaphorical haze or social "fog," which can envelope the entire process. This social fog renders personal responsibility debatable.

When responsibility within a harmful organizational process becomes debatable, two types of bureaucrats emerge. The first type of bureaucrat *genuinely* does not believe that they are personally responsible for contributing to a harmful end result because they are structurally rendered unintentionally ignorant of the consequences. For example, the engineer on a train hauling some tobacco leaves would likely challenge any accusation of being personally responsible for contributing to the mass production of a harmful product like cigarettes.

The physical disconnection separating their technical task of driving a train and the seemingly unrelated final consequences (cancer) likely never crossed their mind. Despite fulfilling an essential role in the cigarette production process, this engineer is unlikely to ever feel personally responsible for contributing to the production of a carcinogenic product and therefore is unlikely to ever self-reflexively critique their personal involvement in the process.

The second type of bureaucrat is aware that their contributions help generate a harmful outcome but, despite this knowledge, they choose to remain intentionally ignorant of this fact. By choosing to be intentionally ignorant, they are able to ignore any moral obligation to cease contributing to the process and can instead continue performing their personally beneficial yet ultimately harmful specialist tasks. The second type of bureaucrat decides to continue to contribute because they sense how difficult it would be for anybody to hold them accountable for the harm inflicted, thus suspecting they can probably act with impunity. That is, the second type of bureaucrat opportunistically realizes that should anyone ever question them over their decision, they could claim (disingenuously) to be the first type of bureaucrat, one who genuinely did not believe, for one reason or another, that they were personally responsible for contributing to a harmful process. By publicly maintaining such a belief, the second type of bureaucrat can continue receiving all the personal benefits associated with performing their specialist task safe in the knowledge that if ever questioned over their role, they could probably deflect all accusations of culpability, thus believing themselves sufficiently "covered."

An excellent example of this second type of bureaucrat are the CEOs of the seven largest US tobacco companies who stated at a 1994 congressional hearing that they did not "believe" nicotine was addictive and that they were not sure if tobacco caused cancer.[46] By stating such beliefs, these executives implied that it would be unfair to hold them responsible for the devastating effects of their success in finding innovative ways of increasing international cigarette sales.[47] To do so would be unfair because they were unaware of and never foresaw the disastrous effects of their actions, even though internal documents and statements by whistle-blowers show they did know that nicotine was addictive and tobacco smoke was deadly.[48] Put simply, these executives were aware their actions contributed to the premature deaths of half-a-million Americans and half-a-million Chinese (and untold others) per year,[49] however, they continued to fulfill their essential contributions to goal achievement because they suspected—hidden within the social fog of responsibility ambiguity—they

could continue receiving whatever personal benefits happened to be associated with performing their specialist role, and that they could do so with probable impunity. With ambiguity surrounding the issue of awareness and therefore responsibility, all these tobacco executives had to do was (as they did) obfuscate, claim naivety, and engage in denial. In response, the US Justice Department launched a perjury probe. However, only one year after the hearing, all seven executives had been replaced or had moved on.[50] Had there been a legal trial and irrefutable evidence demonstrated the CEOs did know about tobacco's deadly effects, they could then turn to the next best evasive strategy: *displace* responsibility for their actions onto an apparently even more responsible link in the organizational chain; like, say, blaming consumers and their unrelenting demand for tobacco products. And if this strategy failed, the CEOs could then try to *diffuse* (dilute) responsibility for their actions by arguing that because their contributions made up just one of many links across a massive organizational chain, all piecemeal contributors were therefore equally yet only fractionally accountable for the harmful outcome—surely a minor transgression.

Both types of bureaucratic functionaries are, without question, personally responsible for their actions—"we are" as Sabini and Silver argue, "responsible for all that we do."[51] However, the difference between them is, because of the compartmentalization inherent within the bureaucratic process, the first type honestly doesn't realize that they are responsible and although the second type knows conceptually that they are responsible, they do not *feel* responsible and opportunistically suspect they probably do not *appear* responsible for contributing to a harmful end result. And, of course, not *appearing* to be responsible may further bolster why they do not *feel* responsible. Thus, the "fog" of responsibility inherent within the bureaucratic process can render,

> some functionaries genuinely unaware of their personal responsibility in the perpetration of negative outcomes, while it can also enable others to opportunistically evade responsibility in the belief that their harmful contributions will be rewarded in the short term and never punished in the longer term.[52]

The key point about responsibility ambiguity is that the organizational process provides the structural conditions that not only make pleading ignorance or displacing/diffusing responsibility for functionary contributions possible, it also renders it difficult to determine who is being honest (the first type of bureaucrat) and who is lying (the second type of bureaucrat). Responsibility can become, as Bauman says, "unpinnable…"[53] Arbiters

have difficulty distinguishing between the honest (unintentionally ignorant) and the deceitful (intentionally ignorant), because the denials of awareness or responsibility of both are technically plausible. Both types of bureaucrats can lay claim to what the CIA notoriously refers to as "plausible deniability."[54] As I will argue, this theory—where responsibility for a harmful outcome is, at each link across the bureaucratic chain, sufficiently equivocal and functionaries are then able to self-interestedly capitalize on that haziness—is central to better understanding the New Baseline condition's high completion rate. I term this the theory of responsibility ambiguity.

To illustrate the ease with which all functionaries within a bureaucratic chain are able to plead ignorance to or displace/diffuse responsibility for their contributions to a harmful outcome, we only need to consider what likely would have happened had one of Milgram's participants lodged a civil case against all of those involved in the Obedience studies, claiming that they (the participant) had in some way been seriously harmed. Although this scenario is hypothetical, it is not unrealistic considering that some participants were so stressed that they feared having heart attacks (see Fig. 6.1) and at least one participant later contacted a lawyer.[55] How would Milgram and his helpers have reacted to a thorough external investigation aimed at establishing who was responsible for harming an innocent person? Though any answer to this question must be speculative, it is difficult to imagine that any of Milgram's helpers would have been eager to claim total responsibility for having seriously harmed an innocent person, especially in the face of financially crippling civil action.

The electrical engineers who built the shock machine that made the experiments possible could have pleaded unintentional ignorance, arguing that Milgram never told them what he intended to do (or did) with the device they constructed. Although Elms, Williams, and McDonough personally gained from performing their roles, had they been faced with such an investigation, is it possible they would have argued that they were only doing what Milgram—the person in charge—told them to? Is it possible they would have been tempted to deflect attention away from themselves and argue they were just following their boss's orders? Much like participants during their post-experimental interviews, Milgram's subordinate personnel could all have pointed out that the experiment was not theirs. And in all honesty, Elms, Williams, and McDonough could have argued that they would never have done what they did of their own volition. They could have added that Milgram led them to believe the procedure was harmless (as stated in the research proposal). Indeed, the entire research team—particularly those nearer to the stress-infliction end of the process—could

have pointed an accusatory finger in Milgram's direction. As James McDonough's son stated in an interview, "no one questioned the ethics of it. […] [We were] saying…was it right for him [James McDonough] to put people through this? And everybody said, 'Nah, it's Milgram's fault.'"[56]

Should it have turned out that the Obedience studies indeed broke new ground, Milgram's other helpers (Buxton at Yale University and the National Science Foundation committee) knew that the reputations of their respective organizations would benefit. And of course, advancing one's organization is tantamount to advancing oneself.[57] However, the entanglement of their organizations in a burdensome civil case would have suddenly rendered any such benefits null. So it seems plausible that Yale and the National Science Foundation would also have been tempted, in such a case, to argue that Milgram, the "Principal Investigator," was responsible because he had assured them that the experiments were harmless.[58] With the potentially detrimental repercussions of a civil case hanging over them, all links in the chain would surely have felt a strong inclination to turn on Milgram—if someone had to be held accountable, why should it be any of them?

Which leaves Milgram. The young scholar could have faced financial ruin and, before the age of 30, an abrupt end to a promising academic career. How would he have responded to a legal suit? What defense could he possibly offer? With so much at stake, it seems plausible that he too would have been inclined to evade or, more realistically, mitigate his responsibility for having harmed an innocent person. Although it would not have been a wise career move, Milgram could have displaced responsibility for his actions onto Yale for pressuring him as an untenured assistant professor in an institution where few would be offered the financial security of a tenured position[59] into pursuing innovative (risky?) research. He could also have blamed the National Science Foundation, a prestigious government funding agency that financially granted him approval to pursue the research. Even more desperately he could have tried to argue that, technically speaking, he never hurt anybody and that the investigators should take a closer look at Williams, the person who actually inflicted the stress on participants (and Williams did state during the experiments that "I'm responsible").[60] Perhaps more realistically, Milgram, as the principal investigator, could have tried to diffuse responsibility for his actions by claiming that he genuinely believed the experiments to have been harmless, a belief the public record demonstrates he had maintained from the start. Thus, he was merely responsible for having underestimated the dangerousness of the experiments, and therefore the harm inflicted was an unforeseen and unfortunate accident. Further, Milgram could even have

suggested that he never intended to harm anybody and was only moti-vated by the most honorable of intentions: to better understand and per-haps help prevent a future human tragedy like the Holocaust.

Although these hypothetical scenarios are mere speculation, they illus-trate how responsibility ambiguity *could* have enabled every link in the Obedience-study chain to plead ignorance to or displace/diffuse respon-sibility for the harmful end result. And had they done so, it is possible that all, none, or some of them would have been lying.

How, then, among all the self-deception and lies is the second type of bureaucrat able to live with themselves? One answer is that the com-partmentalization inherent in the bureaucratic process structurally insu-lates the vast majority of functionary links from ever having to personally experience the harmful end results. The circumvention of reality means that they need not ever think about the disturbing consequences of their actions. It seems that knowledge of harm-doing in concept does not sting the guilty conscience nearly as much as knowledge of harm in per-ceptual reality. With most bureaucratic functionaries being physically or emotionally distant from the disturbing end results, their essential con-tributions to the overall process do not feel or appear all that sinister—harm-doing is rendered a "purely theoretical notion."[61] This physical and emotional distance from harmful outcomes helps diminish feelings of responsibility.[62] The second type of bureaucrat thus purposefully lives in a structurally insulated world of knowing (in concept) without know-ing (in reality), and they protract their unaffected emotional universes by actively pursuing a course of intentional ignorance—they avoid any infor-mation that might upset them. In this world, technical tasks can remain physically divorced from their destructive implications.

This is why Michael Moore's satirical television series *The Awful Truth* proved so cutting when during one Christmas Eve special, he organized a group of gravely ill people with laryngectomies to sing festive season carols through their voice prostheses in the lobbies of major cigarette company headquarters. Cigarette executives, whose specialist organiza-tional contributions are hidden in the upper ranks of the production pro-cess, are, thanks to the bureaucratic process, structurally able to avoid having to encounter the harmful end results of smoking cigarettes. They need not visit the hospital wards and hospices lined with people dying miserably from horrific diseases caused by their product. However, with Moore's Christmas choir in their lobby, the executives could not leave their buildings without physically confronting—directly seeing and hear-ing—this large group of "well-wishers" who had suffered enormously

from the ravages of first and secondhand tobacco smoke. Here the executives' technical tasks and their moral implications became unavoidably conjoined. One carol singer said to Philip Morris' Manager of Media Affairs, who was trying to push him and his fellow singers out the door, "Do you want to see it?" referring to the flabby hole in his throat (she did not). Moore quipped that, in more ways than one, his group of well-wishers "really struck a chord in Philip Morris."[63]

Milgram, it transpires, was well aware of the structural ability of bureaucratic organization to insulate most functionaries from the harmful end results of their actions, noting, "when one is only an intermediate link in a chain of evil action," it becomes "psychologically easy to ignore responsibility" for one's actions, because most links in the chain are "far from the final consequences of the action. […] Thus there is a fragmentation of the total human act; no one man decides to carry out the evil act and is confronted with its consequences."[64] Here Milgram was referring to the Peer Administers Shock's condition. Those that completed it often later explained that they did not believe themselves responsible for the learner's painful experience because they were not the inflictor of shocks (even though they performed a task that made it possible for "shocks" to be inflicted). However, the veracity of such explanatory accounts does not add up because in the Proximity Series (Conditions 1–4), where participants did flick the switches, those who completed were more inclined than those who didn't to shift the blame to either the experimenter or the learner.[65] Despite this general tendency of "obedient" participants to blame anyone but themselves, when they displaced responsibility for their actions elsewhere, Milgram sensed strong parallels with functionaries working within bureaucratic settings, noting that with "fragmentation of the total human act […] [t]he person who assumes full responsibility for the act has evaporated. Perhaps this is the most common characteristic of socially organized evil in modern society."[66] It is ironic, then, that although Milgram was aware of his "obedient" participants' tendency to displace responsibility for their actions and even managed to trace the cause of it to structural forces inherent within the bureaucratic process, he seems to have remained oblivious to the fact that he and his helpers could have done the same thing.

A major weakness in the above analysis, however, is that even if Milgram and his helpers *could* have pleaded ignorance to or displaced/diffused responsibility for their actions, this does not mean they *would* have done so had any participants been seriously harmed. And even if it were possible to somehow show with greater certainty that on seriously harming a

participant, Milgram and his helpers would indeed have tried to plead igno-
rance to or displace/diffuse responsibility, such a discovery would reveal
nothing about who among them was using such justifications in earnest
(the first type of bureaucrat) or in deceit (the second type of bureaucrat).

Although the above hypothetical scenario is mere speculation, there
is, however, a much stronger reason to suspect that had any participants
been seriously harmed, all links in Milgram's organizational process
would have tried to plead ignorance to or displace/diffuse responsi-
bility for their actions. That is, *before* the first official experiment, those
further up the chain contemplated the possibility of participants being
harmed and, as a consequence, discussed the precautionary measures
that they would rely upon to avoid legal culpability in that event. In
other words, in fear of the hypothetical scenario I've described com-
ing true, protective measures were explored solely with the intention of
avoiding the burdens of responsibility. The National Science Foundation,

> raised the question with their general counsel of who would be responsi-
> ble – the National Science Foundation or Yale – for any negative effects on
> the subjects. The [National Science Foundation] lawyer thought that Yale
> would be legally responsible.[67]

So it transpires that the National Science Foundation was aware that par-
ticipants might be harmed, and only when armed with the reassurance
that legal responsibility could be displaced onto Yale would they agree it
was safe for them to risk innocent people's welfare. This evidence indi-
cates that the National Science Foundation was an example of the second
type of bureaucrat; in that, they opportunistically sensed they would ben-
efit from association with Milgram's research and suspected they could
do so with impunity should any harm result.

However, if the National Science Foundation thought Yale would shoul-
der full responsibility for any "negative effects" on participants, they would
have been surprised to learn that before participants could receive their
$4.50 payment, they had to sign "a general release form" which stated: "In
participating in this experimental research of my own free will, I release Yale
University and its employees from any legal claims arising from my participa-
tion."[68] As Milgram states in the last line of Fig. 7.1: "The release, of course,
was not used for experimental purposes, but to protect us against legal
claims." If any participants were hurt, it appears Yale University intended to
displace responsibility on to the participants themselves (probably more as a
deterrent to any of them contemplating legal action against Yale).

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A fu ther small difference in this condition is this: in the 4 earlier conditions the payment of the check was so arranged that it was only the naive subject and not the victim who received payment and signed the receipt and release. This was done because it was felt that many subjects would use the fact of the vic tim's having signed the release to justify their own action, and I did not want this to happen. So e devised the procedure whereby--after the victim is strapped in the chair the experimenter 'rmembers' the check, but by them it is too late so that mly the naive subj ct can sign the release. [The release, of cou se, was not used for experimental purposes, but to protect us against legal claims.]

Fig. 7.1 The protective measure "against legal claims" (SMP, Box 46, Folder 163)

The waiver seems to have had its intended effect. Had the learner really been harmed, at least one participant was willing to blame himself (and not Yale):

> The experi[ment] left such an effect on me that I spent the night in a cold sweat and nightmares because of the fear that…I might have killed the man in the chair. This fear was aroused from the fact that I had to sign papers that I would bring no charges against Yale.[69]

If Milgram genuinely believed his own public statements about the harmlessness of the Obedience studies, why did he feel the need to include this legal protection? Perhaps he knew in advance that the experiments might be dangerous. Having introduced legal protection that rendered "Yale University and its employees" legally blameless, it appears, in the tradition of the second type of bureaucrat, Milgram also sensed that he and his team could reap whatever personal benefits were associated with running the experiments and do so with probable impunity. There was certainly sinister intent behind Milgram's strategy to ensure participants signed the legal waiver, as Williams' "EXPERIMENTER'S INSTRUCTIONS" manual illustrates. After the learner had been strapped into the shock chair and the experimenter and participant left the room, Williams was then to say to the participant,

> If you'll sit down there [at the shock machine], we'll begin… Oh, the first thing I should do is to pay you. It slipped my mind. (GET CHECK AND RECEIPT) I guess that, rather than unstrap the learner from his chair, I'll wait and pay him later. Now, I'll have to get your name and signature on this receipt for our records. Please read and sign the standard clearance we must have from all participants in our research, although this project itself is not dangerous.[70]

Again, this cunningly veiled legal waiver—where Williams distracted participants with the issue of payment in exchange for their signature—bolsters the argument that at least some of those within the organizational chain were aware that participants might be harmed. Consequently, the leading figures involved in helping convert the experiments into reality may not have been as innocent as they might later have been tempted to claim had any participants been harmed. Only after all the data had been collected, and nobody seriously harmed, did Milgram inform other

academics like Baumrind, who were critical of his research on ethical grounds, that he accepted "full responsibility for the design and execution of the study."[71]

It also transpires that the lower-order functionaries—who as "employees" of Yale no doubt felt "covered" by the legal waiver—were not just following Milgram's "orders." Williams, for example, who was meant to react to the participants' resistance with a handful of sequential prods, instead often strayed from the script and invented his own vigorously demanding prods.[72] For example, when one participant offered to return the $4.50 so he could stop inflicting further shocks, Williams responded, "The money is not the issue…it's essential that you continue the experiment." The participant then offered to change places with the learner, eliciting Williams' forthright rejection, "No we can't do that once we've started […] You have no other choice Teacher, please continue […] The next word is 'rich.'"[73] Another participant wanted to talk directly with the learner, but Williams stipulated, "There is to be no contact between the teacher and the learner until the test is over." Then, as the participant procrastinated, Williams barked, "I don't understand what the problem is?"[74]

As forceful as Williams could be during the tests, during debriefings he would point out to participants that his actions were not personal—he did not "like to fool" them.[75] Why, then, did he treat participants so callously during the experiments? Williams may have been influenced by what Friedrich terms the "rule of anticipated reactions,"[76] which, according to Brief, Buttram, Elliott, Reizenstein, and McCline,

> implies subordinates may, and are expected to, ask themselves, 'How would my superior wish me to behave under these circumstances?' Thus, the implementation of authority does not necessarily require that a command be uttered; rather, the 'order' may be implicit.[77]

Without prompting, Williams anticipated what his boss, Milgram, desired most: a consistent attempt to maximize the completion rate.[78] With time and experience, Williams displayed great feats of bottom-up innovation in the invention of progressively more coercive (stressful?) prods. For example, during one exchange with the experimenter, a sceptical participant suspected the learner was not actually being shocked. The experimenter's response is an excellent illustration of just how shrewd he could be in parrying a participant's attempts to

break free: "Well if you don't believe that he's getting the shocks, why don't you just continue with the test and we'll finish it?"[79] The regularity with which Williams strayed from his "EXPERIMENTER'S INSTRUCTIONS" suggests that Milgram never attempted to correct him, and therefore probably approved of Williams' actions. In any case, if Williams had kept faithfully to Milgram's handful of prescribed prods, it would have been impossible during the experiments to convincingly answer the wide variety of unpredictable questions he received.[80] As we shall see later, lowly subordinates reacting to vague signals from those hierarchically above them does resemble perpetrator behavior during the Holocaust.[81] Milgram's *top-down authority* in conjunction with Williams' interactive *bottom-up innovations* shares much in common, for example, with Browning's chapter title "German Killers: Orders from Above, Initiative from Below."[82] In conflict with Weber's bureaucracy as an ideal type where functionaries simply implement their boss's top-down "rules and regulations,"[83] Stefan Kühl (and others) argues that in efficient hierarchical organizations, this kind of top-down *and* bottom-up interactive behavior is common.[84] In fact, organizational systems' theorists in the tradition of Niklas Luhmann actually term such interactions the "dual power process…"[85] Interestingly, Hilberg's main criticism of the application of the Obedience experiments to the Holocaust was that Milgram's account made no mention of this interactive feature that was so important to the Nazi regime's perpetration of genocide.[86]

Williams' innovative and tenacious approach to preventing participants from escaping shows him trying to fulfill his employer's desire knowing he would be rewarded generously for doing so, and, amid the fog of responsibility ambiguity, sensing he could probably do so with impunity. Had any participants been harmed, it would not have been in his interest to inform investigators of his creative, yet stress-inducing innovations. Instead, what would have been in his interest would have been to argue that he was "just following orders" and that Milgram told him the experiments were harmless. The so-called legal "release," however, indicates his boss knew from the start they might not be.

Indeed, it seems Milgram's awareness that participants might be harmed preyed on his conscience. According to Blass, Milgram's private notes "provide a window into the workings of Milgram's mind, sometimes revealing inner conflicts that are not visible in his published writings or public statements."[87] In an undated document titled "An

Experimenter's [Moral?] Dilemma," Milgram concedes, "it is not nice to lure people into the laboratory and ensnare them into a situation that is stressful and unpleasant to them."[88] Another document titled "OBEDIENCE ETHICS OF EXPERIMENTATION January 1962" concedes that,

> Several of these experiments, it seems to me, are just about on the border-line of what ethically can and cannot be done with human subjects. Some critics may feel that at times they go beyond acceptable limits. These are matters that only the community can decide on, and if a ballot were held I am not altogether certain which way I would cast my vote. An important distinction is to be drawn between the situation as the subject sees it, and the situation as it actually is. It does, indeed, seem horrible when a man with a heart condition pleads to be let out of an electric chair, and the experimenter refuses. This would surely be unethical and, to my way of seeing it downright immoral.[89]

Here Milgram's theoretical vote expresses his *apparent* belief: the experiments were unethical. Yet his actual vote—complete the research program with disregard for participant welfare—reveals his *actual* belief. Put another way: Milgram knew his experiments were "immoral" and was clearly concerned about his participants' "horrible" experiences. But such concerns failed to surpass the point where they became a controlling factor in his behavior.[90]

As Sabini and Silver note,

> Carrying out the evil may even have been something they disliked doing while they did it. For all these reasons, it was easy…to feel so innocent, so lacking in responsibility for the evil they performed. But feelings aside, they were responsible…because in *these* cases the question of intent is irrelevant to the question of responsibility. No matter how much the evil… *felt* accidental, it was not. […] We may *feel* responsible only for what we intend; we are responsible for all that we do. And we know it. Because our *feelings* of responsibility are grounded in our intentions, and bureaucracies arrange that everyone need only intend to follow the rules, the result is that bureaucracies have a genius for organizing evil. (Italics original)[91]

Although Sabini and Silver are referring here to Obedience-study participants and Nazi bureaucrats, their observations are perhaps equally applicable to Milgram, Elms, Williams, and all the other helpers who had no

intentions of harming innocent people, but through their actions, ended up doing so anyway. It is important to note that continuing to contribute to a harmful process was a choice that, despite the absence of any malevolent intent, still rendered all of those involved responsible for their actions. And this realization seems to have caught up with Milgram's conscience:

> Moreover, considered as a personal motive of the author –the possible benefits that might redound to humanity –withered to insignificance alonisde [*sic*] the strident demands of intellectual curiosity. When an investigator keeps his eyes open throughout a [scientific] study, he learns things about himself as well as about his subjects, and the observations do not always flatter.[92]

So, despite the disparaging and prejudicial remarks Milgram frequently made about his "obedient" participants,[93] it seems he also made choices he later came to regret. Milgram attributed his regrettable motives to his insatiable "intellectual curiosity," however, like Perry, Blass suspects careerism was also an important driver: "I think, really, he was driven by the need to make a mark for himself. I believe that his ambition made him overlook or minimise the suffering of some of his subjects."[94]

Curiously, it turns out that not all of Milgram's helpers "voted" as he did in favor of completion. Unbeknownst to Harré, who questioned the failure of Milgram's assistants to resist inflicting near "nervous collapse" on innocent people, one of the actors did manage to quit for ethical reasons. This suggests the existence of a third type of bureaucrat; one who refuses to continue contributing to a harmful process because they feel and accept personal responsibility for the effects stemming from their actions. According to the son of Robert J. Tracy, who was an actor in three conditions, his father quit his acting job when an old army buddy he had served with in World War Two entered the laboratory. Tracy, "couldn't go through with it" and his son was "kind of proud" of his father's recalcitrance.[95] Although the rest of the research team (including Tracy's coactor Emil Elges) are mentioned in the acknowledgments in Milgram's book,[96] Tracy's name is conspicuously absent. The decision to pull out had negative implications: all personal benefits (pecuniary reward) associated with the fulfillment of his tasks ceased. But this was unlikely to have been the only binding force affecting Tracy's decision-making process. As mentioned earlier, the division

of labor inherent in the bureaucratic process not only has a strain resolving effect, it simultaneously also has an inherent binding force termed bureaucratic momentum.

The Binding Force of Bureaucratic Momentum

Bureaucratic momentum takes hold when functionaries experience pressure to perform their specialist roles by preceding and sometimes even succeeding functionary links in an organizational chain. This coercive force within the bureaucratic process seems to be generated by the cumulative momentum of the many simultaneously moving functionary cogs bearing down and exerting pressure on every other cog. Individual functionary links experience this pressure interpersonally in the form of "to get along" one must "go along." Employees located along a moving assembly line, as in Ford's factories, all feel pressure to fulfill their specialist tasks in a timely manner in the pursuit of overarching organizational goals. Of course, a single, uncooperative functionary who refuses to perform his or her specialist role actually has the power, at least in the short term, to threaten organizational goal achievement. Should that rebellious functionary prove irreplaceable for any reason, he or she could even cause systemic organizational collapse.[97] In bureaucracies such an outcome is, however, more in theory than reality since resistance by functionary links is typically the exception to the rule. Resistance is uncommon, because not only must the individual functionary be prepared to sacrifice whatever personal benefits they would otherwise receive for performing their role but also a refusal to fulfill one's tasks threatens whatever personal benefits all the other functionaries stand to receive for performing their roles. As Max Weber argued, "The individual bureaucrat is thus forged to the community of all the functionaries who are integrated into the mechanism. They have a common interest in seeing that the mechanism continues its functions and that the societally exercised authority carries on."[98] Thus, other people's expectations can form a strong check on potential rebelliousness.[99] In the case of the Obedience studies, it seems plausible that when Tracy baulked, he encountered pressure from at least some of his coactors to change his mind (because their future income would suddenly have been placed in jeopardy); from the research assistant, whose role was to ensure an unencumbered flow of participants; and of course from a predictably furious Milgram under pressure from his National Science Foundation investors to complete the research program

in a timely manner. As bureaucratic momentum took hold in the laboratory, there must have been intense pressure on all functionaries to continue performing their specialist roles. In this light, the experience of Wes Kilham, who in the early 1970s performed the experimenter role in an Australian Obedience studies replication, is instructive,

> 'It was traumatic, difficult. I started disliking it very early on in the piece.' He confessed that he probably would have quit if he had been a staff member. But he was three-quarters of the way through his honours year. 'There were demands on me to complete the damn thing, and it was too late to turn around and choose another topic. I was trapped into thinking I had to see it through.'[100]

Whether or not Milgram's helpers likewise felt trapped is unclear. What is clear is that only Tracy resisted the coercive momentum of the Obedience study's bureaucratic machine. Despite any personal reservations they may have had, all other functionaries found it easier to go along with the collective bureaucratic momentum. Furthermore, this coercive push can also have a strain resolving influence that simulates feeling of responsibility ambiguity. If individual helpers feel real or imagined pressure from others within the organizational chain to contribute, then—in an environment where personal responsibility is hazy—they can ease their own stress by convincing themselves that the pushers are responsible for their actions.

OTHER FORCES INHERENT WITHIN THE BUREAUCRATIC PROCESS

For Milgram and his many helpers, once the stress associated with initial fears, concerns, and reservations started to recede, their repetitive tasks likely started to feel normal. From there, the suffocating drudgery of routine set in. All links in the chain worked in robotic-like unison toward overarching goal achievement. Williams, the experimenter, provides an excellent example of an initially hesitant harm-doer who gradually transitioned into Ritzer's emotionless human robot. His specialized task—which involved inflicting intense stress on participants from across a room—acquired the monotonousness of any routine activity. As Perry observes of the audio tapes of the experiments, "Certainly, Williams' voice in condition three…was more youthful and energetic than his voice in condition 20, just six month later, which was weary monotone."[101] Furthermore,

What's both typical and striking about these excerpts is that for Williams, who had by that point conducted over 750 of these experiments, the experiment itself was purely routine. He delivered the debriefing as a monologue, in much the same brisk and authoritative way that he conducted the rest of the experiment, and did not invite questions or discussion. On the tapes of the experiments in condition 23, one of the few conditions in which subjects were told that they had been tricked, the pattern of debriefing across all subjects, whether obedient or disobedient, was the same.[102]

Indeed, Williams' younger brother, Mark, a stand-in actor, noticed John's "robotic" delivery, "Everything was monotone; he said the same thing every time."[103] Overtime those working in bureaucracies where the direct infliction of harm has long become routine can come to treat others in an increasingly dehumanized and dehumanizing manner. As Max Weber long ago noted, the more bureaucracy is dehumanized "the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation."[104] As functionaries more and more emulate cogs in a machine, the absence of all emotion can result in the abusive treatment of others. Again, as Perry observes, by the last variations, Williams was treating participants much more harshly than he had in earlier conditions. "In the early tapes of condition three, Williams scrupulously terminated the experiment after he had delivered the fourth prod."[105] Yet, by the twentieth condition, Women as Subject,

Williams insisted that one woman continue 26 times. He argued with two others 14 times; one, 11 times; another, nine times; another, eight times; and noted that, in the case of Subject 2014, the experiment ended in an 'argument.' Williams' behaviour implied that the women wouldn't be leaving the lab unless they got to the end of the shock board. At one point in her argument with Williams, Subject 2029, a 46-year-old widowed Jewish housewife, switched off the machine in defiance. Williams switched it back on and insisted that she continue. (She did.)[106]

Reflecting on how Williams cornered many participants in the final (24th) Relationship condition—driving some into a veritable state of fury—it is probably fair to argue that he had indeed hardened against participants' emotional distress, and had become an unrelenting and calloused inflictor of stress on innocent others. Like a torturous game of cat and mouse, is it possible that Williams' increased attempts to cut

participants off from the experiment's usual escape routes had, for him, become the only enjoyable (cruel?) part of a job that had, because of routinization, long lost its novelty?

The changes in Williams' behavior illustrate how functionaries can come to see the emotional reactions of those they harm as an extraneous and annoying hindrance to organizational goal achievement. If Williams, who was the most direct harm-inflictor among Milgram's many helpers, could come to treat people so callously, imagine how much easier the same transition must have been for other, more emotionally distant and compartmentalized, links in the bureaucratic chain. Consider, for example, Milgram himself, whose dehumanized treatment of participants in the near-blind pursuit of his research goals is perceivable in the Relationship condition.

> When Subject 2432, a 40-year-old fireman, told Milgram how bad he felt for his friend, Milgram was more interested in the man's recruitment potential. Subject 2432: He didn't want to come down. I talked him into this … I'll never live this down. Milgram: We're desperately short of subjects. Is there anyone you know? Subject 2432 tried to fob him off, but Milgram persisted, asking the man to give him the phone numbers of people he thought would volunteer. Milgram: We need to finish the experiments by Wednesday. We need nine by Wednesday … Just give me a name or two …[107]

Nearing the end of the data collection process, Milgram appears to trample over any human fodder that threatened to get in his way. Given the tendency for callous disregard to develop over time, it is not surprising to see Milgram behave in this way, nor that the particularly unethical Relationship condition was the last conducted. Through many small steps, harm-doing established itself as a normative routine for Milgram and his helpers—their desensitized states undermining any realization of just how unethical the Relationship condition was. It is unlikely that Milgram or his team would have had the nerve and stamina to run the Relationship condition at the start of the research program. The slippery slope of the foot-in-the-door phenomenon—small and barely perceivable steps in an increasingly radicalized direction—probably had as much of a strain resolving effect on those working within the Obedience study's bureaucratic process as it did on participants.

During debriefings, Williams frequently told participants that his insensitive actions were nothing personal, but "we had to…set you up

this way."[108] Weber further suggested that bureaucratic organization can harden the ability of functionaries to empathize with others. They can produce a personality type with little or no capacity to engage in morally reflective judgment, somebody not all that far removed from an unfeeling sociopath.[109] The absence of emotion, according to Weber, is frequently appraised as bureaucracy's "special virtue," in that it increases the chances of goal achievement. However, Weber might have added that this "special virtue" is also bureaucracy's special vice; the division of labor enhances instrumental effectiveness by enabling all functionary links to set aside their own humanity to act as if they were merely unfeeling cogs in a machine.[110] That is, bureaucracy encourages among bureaucrats amoral rationality—a preoccupation with pursuing the best means to a preconceived end while ignoring any moral or human implications stemming from goal achievement.[111] Again, bureaucrats are typically able to ignore the harmful implications stemming from their collective contributions because bureaucracy as a compartmentalized structure helps divorce the technical from the moral. If we accept that Milgram created a veritable bureaucratic machine, then it makes logical sense to explore the tripartite relationship between the Obedience studies, bureaucracy, and power.

Power and Bureaucracy

At some level every functionary link in the Obedience studies' bureaucratic chain confronted the difficult moral dilemma of whether to contribute to or withdraw from what was a dangerous, stress-inducing experiment. Repeated confrontation with this dilemma was no doubt difficult for Milgram and his helpers. However, it should be kept in mind that every one of them still occupied positions of relative privilege—all had the *choice* of whether or not to contribute. In a sense, then, every functionary link occupied a position of at least some power. Their decision granted them power over the fate of a real person, someone deprived of informed consent and the right to withdraw—a person with far less power than themselves. As a result, because the experiment placed innocent people under intense stress, the decision to inflict harm was ultimately determined by the inherently powerful choices of all those links within this bureaucratic process. When the Obedience studies are viewed from this perspective, they are arguably about an unequal system where the powerful collectively decide over the fate of the less

powerful—as Stam, Lubek, and Radtke convincingly argue, Milgram and his confederates engaged in "a demonstration of power itself."[112] Rochat agrees, "What *was* going on…was the inexorable subordination of the less powerful by the powerful."[113]

It is perhaps of no coincidence, then, that Milgram obtained his highest completion rates in the conditions run at Yale University, an institution which in the early 1960s was a concentrated polity of upper class white men, a "masculine world of wealth and power."[114] This paradigm of power[115] no doubt aided Milgram in him morally inverting the reality of all of those who worked under him from Elms, Williams, and McDonough to, of course, the participants (many of whom looked up to Yale University with, as Milgram puts it, "respect and sometimes awe").[116] So to some degree, Yale University's institutional authority likely helped legitimate the infliction of harm. And, because at each stage there were personal benefits to be had by those who occupied positions of power (pecuniary reward, prestige, publications, and career advancement), the Obedience studies were arguably also about the abuse of power within an iniquitous system. That power was indeed being abused was perhaps best illustrated by the fact that when the choices of these powerful people included an outcome that detracted from their personal self-interests—for example, with Tracy when his army buddy entered the laboratory—Milgram's seemingly monolithic bureaucratic machine rather abruptly ground to a halt.

One person in the Obedience studies who assumed enormous power in deciding over the fate of the less powerful and, at the time, could only envision personally benefiting from choosing to harm others, was Milgram: *he* might identify the key causal force/s behind the Holocaust; *he* might obtain tenure at an ivy league university; and *he* might even become as world-famous as Sherif, Lewin, and Asch. And with the help of Yale and the National Science Foundation, *he* (and not an ethics committee) had the power to choose whether or not to try and convert innocent people into stuttering wrecks. And, thanks to the legal waiver signed by all participants, *he* could do all this with probable impunity. With job security, promotion, fame, and fortune up for grabs, there really was no obvious downside to pursuing the experimental program, even one he knew was unethical (not for him anyway).

The point this chapter tries to make clear is that most (but certainly not all) functionary links in a chain can be tempted into

unethically resolving a moral dilemma, when they are led to suspect they will benefit personally, and that within the fog of responsibility ambiguity they can probably do so with social and legal impunity. Under such conditions, powerful bureaucrats within iniquitous systems will often prioritize their personal desires over the greater needs of the less powerful (as I will later argue many Germans did during the Nazi era). It was in these conditions that Milgram made his decision to proceed.

As the powerful generally expect, the course of history moved in Milgram's favor—initially at least. Harvard University, eager to capitalize on his rising star, opportunistically hired Milgram to a three-year tenure tracked appointment at the end of 1962.[117] Those who recruited him knew, of course, that they would gain through their association with Milgram as a colleague, and that they could also conveniently avoid having to shoulder responsibility for any public relations mess he might leave behind him at Yale.

> WHILE MILGRAM WAS at Yale, [Gordon] Allport had told his [Harvard University] colleague Roger Brown, in a slightly conspiratorial manner: 'I'm rather glad he's doing these experiments in New Haven [Yale University], but we'll hire him as soon as he finishes.'[118]

In 1964, the *American Association for the Advancement of Science* awarded Milgram the Socio-Psychological Prize, "a sign—or so Milgram thought—that he had arrived."[119] Milgram was quickly becoming one of the most famous social psychologists in the world, but the tide that initially moved in his favor soon changed.

Baumrind's critique of the ethics of the Obedience studies—published the same year Milgram won his above award—was a seminal work that changed perceptions of Milgram's research and, in 1973, encouraged the *American Psychological Association* to revise its "Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research with Human Participants…"[120] Milgram tried to fight the changing tide, arguing that social psychologists deserved exemptions, much like medical doctors fighting polio. But such arguments fell on deaf ears.[121] The revision signaled "the good old days when the restrictions were fewer" were over.[122] Researchers like Milgram lost the power to decide what was best for their "subjects"—now termed "participants."

> There has been a shift in recent years, underlined by national associations such as the American Psychological Association and the British Psychological Society, to banish the old word "subject" in favor of the new term "participant." It is easy to see the objections to the original term: It is impersonal, somewhat dehumanizing, suggests that the individual has been "subjected" and thus has little free will, and so forth.[123]

As volunteers participants *chose* whether or not to "participate," they were (apparently) no longer "subjected" to tests.[124]

Then, in 1967 Milgram was declined tenure at Harvard mainly because of deep divisions on the tenure committee, some members of which, according to Roger Brown, thought Milgram "was sort of manipulative, or the mad doctor, or something of this sort… They felt uneasy about him."[125] This failure hit Milgram hard and he became depressed. He was, as we have seen, accustomed to achieving his goals despite whatever obstacles got in his way.[126] By this stage Milgram was already quite famous, certainly controversial, and frequently maligned. Other universities were not interested in hiring him either. Eventually, the City University of New York (CUNY) offered him a tenured position, which he accepted. Milgram's impunity, to some degree, had run out.

The question remains, however, would Milgram have made a different choice in the early 1960s if he knew that later he would have to pay a price for his decision to proceed with the experiments? In asking this speculative question, it should be remembered that Milgram still managed to land on his feet. After having undertaken the Obedience studies, there followed an array of publications in prestigious journals, a book published in many different languages, book royalties, worldwide fame (or infamy), and a plum academic appointment (even if it was not the one he desired). Still, Milgram's experiments do hint at an answer. He had shown that when people with power over others know they are unable to act with impunity, when the costs are deemed too great, reality can dissuade them from, as Hilberg earlier puts it, turning the bureaucratic wheel.

Conclusion

As he was converting his inchoate research idea into reality, Milgram drew upon the sponsorship, labor, and expertise of many helpers. He provided these helpers with a "scientific" rationale for what amounted to

the infliction of harm on an innocent person. And he further convinced or tempted these helpers into participating by appealing to their different needs or desires. Thus, a cognitive thread of personal benefit soon connected all links in the Obedience studies' organizational chain. As Milgram anticipated the most effective motivational formula for each of his helpers, a powerful organizational process took shape—a bureaucracy with structurally strain resolving and binding effects that further strengthened each individual functionary's commitment to what was a harmful organizational goal.

The National Science Foundation, Yale, the actors, the research assistants, technicians, and Milgram himself all made compartmentalized and fractional contributions to organizational goal achievement. The participation of many specialist helpers can cause a disjuncture between an individual's contributions and any negative effects. This disjuncture can stimulate responsibility ambiguity, a general confusion within and beyond the bureaucratic process over who is totally, mostly, partially, or not at all responsible for a harmful end result. When the issue of personal responsibility becomes debatable in this way, some functionaries may genuinely refuse to believe they are responsible for the harmful end result. However, responsibility ambiguity can also encourage bureaucrats to sense opportunity amid the confusion: they can continue contributing to and benefiting from the infliction of harm safe in the knowledge that they can probably act with impunity. In this way, the responsibility ambiguity inherent within the bureaucratic process provides the fertile strain resolving conditions that make it possible, even attractive, for every link in the organizational chain to plead ignorance to, displace ("pass the buck"), or diffuse responsibility for their harmful contributions. This is what happened in the Obedience studies. Although this largely self-interested account of bureaucratic behavior somewhat conflicts with Weber's impartial and "principled" bureaucratic functionary which separates their "private sphere…from that of the office,"[127] I believe the theory of responsibility ambiguity is still an important tool to better understanding the Obedience studies.

For Milgram and his helpers, the division of labor inherent within the Obedience studies' organizational process made denying responsibility easy and localizing it difficult. Arendt termed this outcome the "rule by Nobody,"[128] where bureaucracy makes it "impossible to localize responsibility and to identify the enemy." As Bauman more forcefully puts it: "*the organization as a whole is an instrument to obliterate responsibility*"

(italics original).[129] Because Milgram and his helpers either genuinely didn't feel responsible or (more commonly) realized they probably didn't appear responsible for their eventually harmful contributions, personal levels of strain subsided, clearing the ethical way for them to get and remain involved in the Obedience studies. While the diffusion and displacement of responsibility structurally, for example, *pulled* Milgram and his helpers into continued participation, simultaneously the force of bureaucratic momentum—where functionary cogs exert a coercive pressure on any potentially rebellious cogs—*pushed* the entire organizational machine in the direction of goal achievement.

Once Milgram and his helpers had committed to completing the research, they found themselves locked into a system of formal rationality which attempted to subvert their basic humanity—their personal agency—in favor of Milgram's initial research goals. Their actions became "divorced from meaning and absolutely mandated by policy."[130] This is the advantage of bureaucracy as an organizational tool—for the powerful with the resources to deploy it, it can get things done, even morally repugnant but apparently "necessary" things. As Weber puts it: "…bureaucratic organization is technically the most highly developed means of power in the hands of the man who controls it…"[131] And for the powerful figure's functionary helpers, bureaucracy acts as a coercive force that, for any harm inflicted, simultaneously aids in mitigating any feelings of personal responsibility.

Near the end of his book, Milgram presents several historical examples of destructive acts associated with the kind of behavior he believed the Obedience studies captured in the laboratory, including those committed by Henry Wirz, Adolf Eichmann, and the US Army during the 1968 My Lai massacre in Vietnam. It could be argued that Milgram's comments on these people and events also apply to all those who worked for him in his own organizational structure. He writes,

> We find a set of people carrying out their jobs and dominated by an administrative, rather than a moral, outlook. […] Euphemisms come to dominate language…guarding the person against the full moral implications of his acts. […] Responsibility invariably shifts upward in the mind of the subordinate. […] The actions are almost always justified in terms of a set of constructive purposes, and come to be seen as noble in the light of some high ideological goal. […] psychological adjustments come into play to ease the strain of carrying out immoral orders. […] where social relationships, career aspirations, and technical routines set the dominant tone.[132]

The overlap of pushes and pulls inherent in Milgram's own bureaucratic process—including a morally inverted and ideologically driven rationale for the infliction of harm (the "scientific" pursuit of knowledge), the diffusion and displacement of responsibility, bureaucratic momentum and all functionaries receiving personal/organizational benefits—is striking. It is for this reason that I suspect that the most enlightening aspect of the Obedience research was not necessarily the results, but Milgram's invention, construction, and management of the experimental program—the organizational structure, the people involved, and how they were pushed and pulled in a coordinated fashion toward the achievement of his predetermined goals. Milgram's goal-oriented bureaucratic process was undoubtedly a powerful, and necessary force in the generation of New Baseline condition's high completion rate.

One objection with this conclusion remains. Some, like Roth, for example, dispute labeling Milgram's experiments a bureaucratic process and his staff as bureaucratic functionaries. He believes,

> there exists no obvious connection between Milgram's experimental set-up and anything *unique* to bureaucracies. The experiments look to test obedience to an authority figure, and the authority in these experiments generally wears the mantle not of a bureaucrat, but of a scientist. (Italics original)[133]

Is there any reason that scientists cannot also be bureaucrats? The Obedience studies meet all of Max Weber's characteristics of bureaucracy: specialization of labor (specialist actors and technicians), a hierarchy of authority (Buxton, Milgram, Williams, the participant), defined responsibilities (Williams, Elms, and McDonough's responsibilities were all defined), a system of rules and procedures (the "EXPERIMENTER'S INSTRUCTIONS" manual), impersonality of relations (Williams' emotionally distant relationships with participants), promotion based on technical qualifications (the hiring of skilled staff like Elms, the technicians, and all the acting staff's pay increases and bonuses), the centralization of authority (Yale University), and written records (the collection of data).[134]

This type of confusion—Milgram was a scientist, not a bureaucrat—traces back to a common misconception that a bureaucrat is strictly an office worker whose main role involves the transfer of paperwork from in-tray to out-tray. However, Max Weber's characteristics of bureaucracy and the functionary human links working within them extended well

beyond those working in an office. In fact, Lipsky terms functionaries at the very end of an organizational chain "street-level bureaucrats": those who directly implement government policy and interact personally with clients, patients, or citizens.[135] They are frequently law enforcement personnel, teachers, social workers, public lawyers, and health workers. To some degree, all push paper. The term "bureaucrat" is not limited to office workers.

If the Obedience studies were a bureaucratic process, then the participants must account as the last functionary link in the organizational chain. As the next chapter shows, this was the case, and furthermore the forces that pushed and pulled Milgram and his helpers into performing their specialist roles exerted a similar influence on participants. Identifying these forces provides the foundations for a new explanatory account for why two-thirds of participants willingly completed the New Baseline condition.

Notes

1. Harré (1979, p. 106).
2. SMP, Box 46, Folder 163.
3. SMP, Box 45, Folder 160; 25 January 1961.
4. Russell (2011, p. 157).
5. Blass (2004, p. 62). See also Perry (2012, p. 57).
6. Meyer (1970, p. 132).
7. Nicholson (2015).
8. SMP, Box 1a, Folder 9. In the immediate aftermath of the first Obedience-study publication, on 16 November 1963, Milgram informed the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*: "The university should not be the subject of your [the editor's] anger: from the outset Yale [Buxton?] advised caution in the difficult area of investigation" (SMP, Box 55, Folder 5).
9. SMP, Box 45, Folder 160.
10. SMP, Box 43, Folder 127.
11. SMP, Box 45, Folder 160.
12. Near the end of 1962, after Milgram had collected his data, at least one faculty member in Yale's Department of Psychology made a formal complaint to the *American Psychological Association* questioning the obedience experiment's ethicality (Blass 2004, pp. 112–113; see also Elms 1995, p. 77).
13. http://transcoder.usablenet.com/tt/www.nsf.gov/about/glance.jsp. Accessed 30 August 2017.

14. SMP, Box 45, Folder 160.
15. Quoted in Nicholson (2011, p. 244).
16. Quoted in Blass (2004, p. 72).
17. Perry (2012, p. 91).
18. SMP, Box 45, Folder 160.
19. SMP, Box 43, Folder 127.
20. Taketo Murata was another research assistant.
21. See, for example, Elms (1972, p. 156).
22. Meyer (1970, p. 132).
23. Elms (2009, p. 32).
24. Elms (2009, p. 33) has stated that, with Milgram's "enthusiastic encouragement," he, Elms, applied for funding to replicate the Obedience studies in Germany in 1962. This application was unsuccessful, but other obedience research opportunities ended more fruitfully for him (see Elms and Milgram, 1966).
25. The only exception to this general rule was the Change of Personnel condition, where Milgram attempted to determine the power of his usual experimenter/learner team.
26. Barnard (1958, pp. 168–169).
27. Barnard (1958, p. 169).
28. SMP, Box 46, Folder 163.
29. "By 1961, when the experiment began, they [John Williams, his pregnant wife, and eight-year old son] had only just moved out of the family home and into their own place in Southbury, Connecticut. John took the job at Yale because he needed the money […] and his high-school science-teacher's salary wasn't enough" (Perry 2012, p. 212).
30. SMP, Box 43, Folder 127. McDonough's son confirmed that with such a large family and his wife again pregnant, "he needed the job" (Perry 2012, p. 223).
31. SMP, Box 46, Folder 163.
32. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2304.
33. Quoted in Perry (2012, p. 99).
34. SMP, Box 62, Folder 126.
35. Fermaglich (2006, p. 89).
36. This was the term Williams used to describe the experiments to his son, Keith Williams (quoted in Perry 2012, p. 213).
37. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2433.
38. SMP, Box 43, Folder 128.
39. See, for example, Russell (2009, p. 173).
40. SMP, Box 45, Folder 160.
41. SMP, Box 43, Folder 128. This provision of special incentives is a technique that organizations frequently rely on to enhance employee

"performance motivation" (Kühl 2016, p. 90). Incentivizing is often necessary because the organizational goal on its own is typically insufficient to best ensure all members perform every necessary task (p. 125).

42. Again, to best ensure member performance, it is actually common for organizations to "offer a range of different means of motivation" (Kühl 2016, p. 125).

43. Breton and Wintrobe (1986, p. 909). See also Kühl (2016, pp. 37–41, 128).

44. Kühl (2016, p. 128). Somewhat similarly, according to Allen (2004, p. 101), "Weber…ignores the varied reasons for why people obey and" much like with the Zone of Indifference, "instead implies that they give their rulers a blank cheque."

45. Russell and Gregory (2015, p. 136).

46. Brandt (2007, p. 366).

47. See Brandt (2007, pp. 449–458).

48. See Brandt (2007, pp. 369–385).

49. Brandt (2007, pp. 367, 454).

50. Brandt (2007, p. 368).

51. Sabini and Silver (1982, p. 66).

52. Russell and Gregory (2015, p. 136).

53. Bauman (1989, p. 163).

54. Turk (1981, p. 231).

55. See, for example, Blass (2004, p. 128).

56. Quoted in Perry (2012, p. 224).

57. Markusen and Kopf (1995, p. 220).

58. SMP, Box 45, Folder 160.

59. Blass (2004, p. 133).

60. Milgram (1974, p. 74).

61. Bauman (1989, p. 26).

62. Bauman (1989, p. 184).

63. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i52qITyCs34. Accessed 3 September 2017.

64. Milgram (1974, p. 11).

65. Milgram (1974, p. 203).

66. Milgram (1974, p. 11).

67. Blass (2004, p. 71).

68. Milgram (1974, p. 64).

69. SMP, Box 44, Divider (no label), #0711.

70. SMP, Box 45, Folder 161.

71. Milgram (1964, p. 852).

72. Darley (1995, p. 130).

73. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2430.

74. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2322.

75. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2433.

76. Friedrich (1946, p. 589).

77. Brief et al. (1995, p. 180).

78. Darley (1995, pp. 130–131).

79. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2439.

80. Blau and Meyer (1971, p. 59) argue that in organizational environments, functionaries frequently stray from their rules and regulations. They do so because strict adherence to rules often promotes inefficiencies because they prevent "flexible adjustments to varying and changing conditions" and "adaption to changing situations." This, they argue, is why strategic managers frequently (as Milgram did) allow subordinates to "'get away with' infractions of many rules" (p. 61).

81. See, for example, Browning (1995, pp. 28–56).

82. Browning (2000, pp. 116–142).

83. Indeed, as Allan confirms, "Weber's sociology of domination is…a top-down sociology…" (2004, p. 102).

84. Allen (2004, p. 115) agrees: Weber was wrong "to believe that the issuing of top-down commands is the way to maximum efficiency. […] It is precisely for this reason that modern corporation seeks to loosen up the bureaucratic structures with 'flat hierarchies' and 'teamworking' which encourage more autonomy" (see also Blau and Meyer 1971, pp. 25–26, 37–50, 57–58).

85. Kühl (2013, p. 85, see also pp. 78–80, 84, 100; 2016, pp. 9, 187–188).

86. "When Milgram performed his experiment at Yale, his model comprised an authority figure and men who did as they were told. […] The reality, however, was much more complex. The bureaucracy that destroyed the European Jews was remarkably decentralized, and its most far-reaching actions were not always initiated at the top. Officials serving in middle or even lower positions of responsibility were producers of major ideas" (Hilberg 1980, pp. 100–101).

87. Blass (2004, p. 117).

88. Quoted in Blass (2004, pp. 117, 320).

89. SMP, Box 46, Folder 165. More specifically, it appears Milgram initially wrote "to my way of seeing things, downright immoral." But then he crossed out "things, downright" and added the word "it."

90. See Damico (1982, pp. 424–425).

91. Sabini and Silver (1982, p. 66).

92. SMP, Box 46, Folder 173.

93. Bartov (2003, pp. 182–191) and Perry (2012, p. 260).

94. Quoted in Perry (2012, p. 25).

95. Quoted in Perry (2012, p. 226).
96. Milgram (1974, pp. xv–xvi)
97. As Weber puts it: "If the official stops working, or if his work is forcefully interrupted, chaos results, and it is difficult to improvise replacements from among the governed who are fit to master such chaos" (quoted in Gerth and Mills 1974, pp. 228–229).
98. Quoted in Gerth and Mills (1974, pp. 228–229). See also Barnard (1958, pp. 169–170).
99. As Blau and Meyer (1971, p. 49) note, in bureaucratic environments, the "extremely disagreeable experience of feeling isolated while witnessing the solidarity of others constitutes a powerful incentive to abandon deviant practices lest this temporary state" of feeling rejected by one's co-functionaries "become a permanent one."
100. Perry (2012, pp. 344–345).
101. Perry (2012, p. 226).
102. Perry (2012, p. 102).
103. Quoted in Perry (2012, p. 215).
104. Quoted in Gerth and Mills (1974, p. 216).
105. Perry (2012, p. 133).
106. Perry (2012, p. 134).
107. Perry (2012, p. 192).
108. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2304.
109. Gregory (1995, p. 17).
110. Russell and Gregory (2011, pp. 512–513).
111. Markusen and Kopf (1995, p. 84).
112. Stam et al. (1998, p. 173).
113. Quoted in Perry (2012, p. 379). In support of the inherent power differential between those high and low in the hierarchical pecking order, consider for example Milgram's post-experimental promise to Fred Prozi that only psychologists would view the film footage of his performance. Prozi, who was unemployed at the time, sought Milgram's assurance that his face would not be shown "nationwide or something" (quoted in Perry 2012, p. 367). Milgram assured him that it would not, but in *Obedience (A Filmed Experiment)*, Milgram broke his promise. What avenues of recourse did Prozi have to challenge an Ivy League high-flyer like Milgram?
114. Perry (2012, p. 117).
115. Spears and Smith (2001).
116. Milgram (1965, p. 69).
117. Blass (2004, p. 132).
118. Blass (2004, p. 131).
119. Blass (2004, p. 130).

120. Blass (2004, p. 129).
121. Russell (2009, p. 104).
122. Spears and Smith (2001, p. 319).
123. Spears and Smith (2001, p. 319).
124. On the other hand, a more cynical interpretation of this change in termi-
    nology might be that the word *participant* implies that a person partaking
    in an experiment chooses to be present and, if harm is somehow inflicted,
    is at least in part responsible for their own fate (*blaming the victim*). So,
    paradoxically, the change in terminology may have extended responsibility
    ambiguity, because should things go awry during an experiment, those in
    the strongest positions of power—the university institutions and their eth-
    ics committees—are better able to escape being held to account (Spears
    and Smith 2001, pp. 318–319; see also Blass 2004, p. 282).
125. Quoted in Blass (2004, p. 153).
126. Blass (2004, p. 155).
127. Quoted in Gerth and Mills (1974, p. 208). It could be argued that this
    statement by Weber is somewhat problematic because he also said that
    the faithful official is also likely to capitalize on promotion opportuni-
    ties and perform their duties "in return for a secure existence" (quoted
    in Gerth and Mills 1974, p. 199). But how can a bureaucrat be truly
    impartial in the face of such opportunities?
128. Arendt (1970, p. 38).
129. Bauman (1989, p. 163).
130. Alvarez (2010, p. 99).
131. Quoted in Gerth and Mills (1974, p. 232).
132. Milgram (1974, pp. 186–187).
133. Roth (2004, p. 222).
134. Admittedly, Milgram's bureaucracy only closely approaches Weber's
    vision of bureaucracy as an ideal type. Milgram's hierarchical chain of
    command was far from Weber's ideal type—for example, the National
    Science Foundation was neither subordinate nor superordinate to
    Milgram. It is therefore unclear who exactly was at the top of the
    Obedience studies' organizational hierarchy (Milgram, Buxton, or the
    National Science Foundation). Also, there was no real promotional arm
    inherent within Milgram's Obedience studies. Finally, as mentioned, the
    top-down and bottom-up interactions between Milgram and Williams
    do not fit well with Weberian bureaucracy as an ideal type (although, as
    mentioned, many scholars like Kühl (2013, p. 85) argue that this inter-
    active behavior *is*, in reality, reflective of organizational behavior and
    that, according to Allen (2004, p. 115), Weber's top-down model is
    problematic.
135. Lipsky (1980, p. 3).

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Explaining the New Baseline Condition's High Completion Rate

> The experimental set up relies…on seduction, the systematic ensarement [sic] of the subject into a web of obligation and uncritically from which he is unable to escape.
>
> —Stanley Milgram[1]

As the last functionary links in the Obedience studies' organizational chain, participants were susceptible to similar structural sources of responsibility ambiguity—the same kinds of pushes and pulls—that affected all the other links further up the bureaucratic chain. This chapter will show that forces like the diffusion and displacement of responsibility and inherently coercive bureaucratic momentum pulled and pushed the majority of participants into implementing Milgram's policy objective of inflicting every shock. Yet, in some important ways the experiences of participants differed from those other functionaries. It should be remembered, however, that because compliant participants were led to suspect that they might be electrocuting (as opposed to inflicting intense stress on) an innocent person, Milgram's strategy to corrupting them was far more coercive, manipulative, and oppressive. To convince most participants to do what they did, Milgram, as he notes above, systematically ensnared them in a cunning psychological trap, a seductive web of obligation, which, despite great efforts on their part, most could not escape.

Before exploring the dark intricacies of Milgram's web of obligation, however, an important issue must first be addressed. If, as I argued previously, a cognitive thread of personal benefit connected all links in the

organizational chain, then, like every other link, "obedient" participants must also, in some way, have personally benefited. But how is it possible that participants, some of whom were reduced to "stuttering wrecks," personally benefited from their decisions to complete?

SELF-INTEREST AND CAVING IN FAVOR OF THOSE WITH GREATER POWER

Broken down to its basic components, the New Baseline procedure is about how ordinary people resolve a pressing dilemma forced upon them. Every time the learner supplied an incorrect answer, the participant had to choose between the experimenter, who wanted him or her to continue inflicting ever-intensifying shocks, or the learner, who wanted him or her to stop. The participant could not appease both parties simultaneously, but rather had to *choose* whether it was more important to help the experimenter obtain results and continue, or help an innocent person with a mild heart condition and stop the experiment. As one participant puts it,

> when he [the experimenter] said 'continue'…I was thinking your side of it too…you're trying to get some scientific…information, and I had to balance…in my own mind…will there be any…real harm to…the fella on the other side versus…what value it's going to be to you.[2]

However, this was no ordinary dilemma. As Milgram suspected, this conundrum has a strong moral dimension. "If people [outside the experiment] are asked to render a moral judgment on what constitutes appropriate behavior in this situation, they unfailingly see disobedience as proper." Disobedience was proper because of the experimenter's "fundamental breach of moral conduct to hurt another person against his will."[3] The Obedience studies have intrigued both academic and lay audiences for so long precisely because refusal to harm an innocent person with a heart condition clearly appears to be the morally right course of action, yet most participants in the New Baseline condition chose exactly the opposite action. Thus, the question remains—why did most participants pursue what was quite clearly the wrong path? Milgram observed,

If sympathetic concern for the victim were the exclusive force, all subjects would have calmly defied the experimenter. Instead, there were both obedient and defiant outcomes, frequently accompanied by extreme tension. […] *Therefore there must be a competing…inhibition that precludes activation of the disobedient response*. The strength of this inhibiting factor must be of greater magnitude than the stress experienced, or else the terminating act would occur. (Italics added)[4]

Identifying this competing inhibition would unravel the mystery of the experiments' results. Milgram answered that "the deeply ingrained disposition not to harm others" competes with and, in most cases, loses out to the "equally compelling tendency to obey others who are in authority."[5] This solution, however, as Lutsky rightly observed, is tautological—a tendency to be obedient explains obedience.[6] An apparent tendency to obey cannot have been the competing drive.[7] Later in his book, Milgram offered another possibility:

The teacher cannot break off and at the same time protect the authority's definitions of his own competence. Thus, the subject fears that if he breaks off, he will appear arrogant, untoward, and rude. Such emotions […] suffuse the mind and feelings of the subject, *who is miserable at the prospect of having to repudiate the authority to his face*. (Italics added)[8]

The suggestion that many participants willingly inflicted seemingly excruciating, perhaps even fatal, electrical shocks on an innocent person because they feared engaging in a socially awkward confrontation with the experimenter appears far too trivial an explanation. However, Milgram was not alone in offering it as an option. Miller and others also note that although concerns about "being 'impolite' to a brutal researcher…seem absurd," "in the actual context of the situation, these concerns are influential."[9] For me, however, this statement does not go far enough. I suspect that participants' fear of engaging in a socially awkward confrontation with the experimenter was actually the most common—but not the only—inhibition to their feelings of sympathy for the learner. Confrontation avoidance, or a fear of being rude, I suspect, was the most common motivational force behind the New Baseline experiment's high completion rate. What evidence is there to support such an assertion?
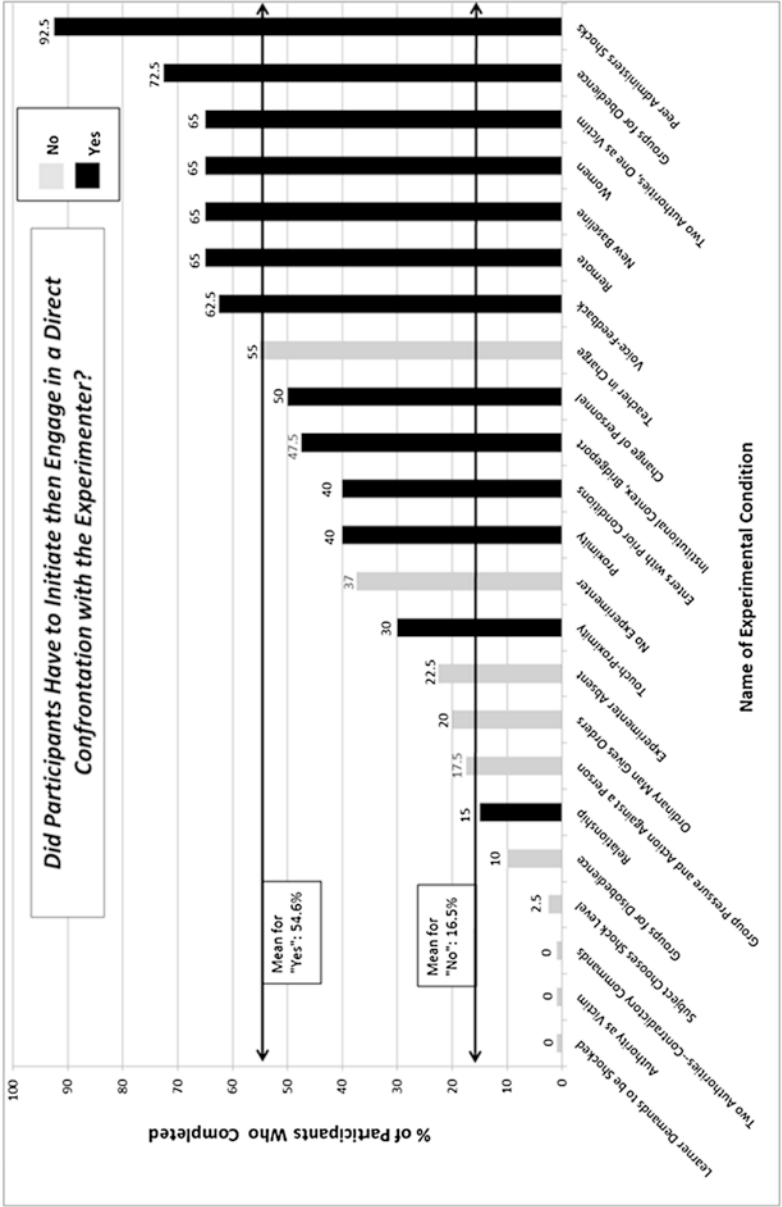
◄ **Fig. 8.1** Completion rates from 23 of the 24 conditions where siding with the learner did or did not require participants to initiate then engage in a confrontation with the experimenter (Condition 21 is not included in this graph because it was a survey. Again, a limitation with this graph is Perry's [2012, p. 134] previously mentioned methodological criticism of the Obedience studies. That is, because Milgram's procedure was not standardized across all variations—Williams, for example, kept "moving the goalposts" by straying from his experimenter instructions—comparing different conditions is admittedly a problematic exercise)

Figure 8.1 illustrates that in nearly all of the experimental variations that eliminated the need to engage in a confrontation with the experimenter (grey bars), no, or very few, participants, inflicted every shock. In the absence of a confrontation, nothing or little competed with most participants' sympathy for the learner's predicament, leaving them free to act on their personal preference and stop inflicting shocks. However, as the darker bars illustrate, siding with the learner in most of the remaining experimental variations required participants to initiate, then engage, in a direct confrontation with the experimenter, and in this situation relatively large percentages of participants inflicted every shock.

As the gradual change from all grey to all black bars shows, participants were less likely to act on feelings of sympathy for the learner if stopping the experiment necessitated a direct confrontation with the experimenter.

The most obvious exception to this general rule is the Relationship condition. Even though ending the Relationship condition required the participant confront the experimenter, 85% did so. Furthermore, not only did the vast majority of participants refuse to complete this variation, 80% did so before the relatively low 195-volt switch.[10] However, the Relationship condition was unique in one important respect—it was the only variation where the learner was not a stranger, but at least an acquaintance known to the participant for two or more years.[11] Participants might have been willing to ignore a stranger screaming in pain, but turning their backs on someone who was at least an acquaintance proved much more difficult. Therefore, completing this condition was more likely than completing any other condition to detract from the participants' personal self-interest. As one participant informed the experimenter, "it may be important to you [to continue], but it isn't that important to me, for a friendship anyway." This participant would have had to later explain his actions and choices. "I thought, this guy's my neighbor, I'm talking to his wife this afternoon…all of a sudden I

realized, this is a man [Inaudible] driving me home […] It's a long ride home." He continued, "I have to face this guy. I have to be…with him. He's my neighbor and I can't go on with this."[12] The decision to continue shocking an acquaintance obviously came with consequences that this participant refused to accept. The participant would not only have to justify his choice to the learner but perhaps also to a mutual circle of potentially judgmental friends. The Relationship condition was a test of the participants' reputation—was he the kind of person willing to stand up to the proverbial schoolyard bully to protect a friend?

If a neighbor proved to be of more importance to a participant than a stranger (the usual learner), then someone of even closer relation to the participant should generate an even lower completion rate. Indeed, when the participant and learner were directly related, no one completed the experiment (0 out of 3). In their post-experimental comments, these participants were frank and their words revelatory on a number of fronts. They explicitly expressed an awareness that they did not have to complete the experiment. They highlighted the greater importance of a learner who was a relative over a mere stranger. They also conveyed an awareness that shocking a relative was not in their best interests. As a result, these participants had little trouble overcoming any fears associated with having to engage in a confrontation with the experimenter. One participant who refused to inflict intensifying shocks on his brother-in-law later explained his actions in these terms:

> *Participant*: "But since he was my brother [Inaudible] I stopped…."
> *Milgram*: "Why do you think you stopped for a brother-in-law?"
> *Participant*: "Well…why should I keep on going? It's not *that* necessary to keep on going right? That's the reason why I stopped."

More revealing in respect to the experiment's inherent moral dilemma, however, is this participant's response when asked what he would have done had the learner instead been a stranger.

> *Participant*: "Well…they told me I should keep on going, I keep on going."
> *Milgram*: "Why? What's the difference?"
> *Participant*: "Well…[Inaudible] is not dangerous, *nothing will happen to me*."
> *Milgram*: "But that's what you were told ahh with your brother in-law."
> *Participant*: "Yeah but there's a difference."

Milgram: "What's the difference?"
Participant: "[…] If it is a stranger I don't listen. Right? We are doing an experiment. They told me to do it, I keep on doing it. He told me keep on going, I keep on going." (Italics added)[13]

Was the difference that shocking a brother-in-law was likely to come with negative consequences that would detract from the participant's self-interests? Obviously, when the learner was a stranger, the consequences of completing were less likely to follow them home—they could simply leave their stressful experience (and their victim) behind them as they exited Milgram's laboratory and, choosing not to think about it again, blissfully carry on with life. Other participants in the Relationship condition also noted how much easier it would have been for them to shock a learner who was a stranger.[14]

Interestingly, in similar coercion-type experiments, other researchers obtained generally low completion rates when they encouraged participants to comply with requests that were likely to detract from their personal self-interests. For example, Wim Meeus and Quinten Raaijmakers note that research has shown that urging participants to pick "up a poisonous snake (Rowland, 1939), taking a coin from a dish of nitric acid (Orne & Evans, 1965; Young, 1952), and carrying out a break-in at their own risk (West, Gunn, & Chernicky, 1975)" obtained completion rates of 0–17%.[15] To test if self-interest was indeed an important variable, Meeus and Raaijmakers undertook an Obedience-study variation called "Legal liability" where, before the experiment started, participants were asked to sign a form that stipulated that if the learner was harmed that they (the participant) would be held legally responsible.[16] This variation produced a significantly lower completion rate than their baseline condition (30 versus 91%), a finding that led the authors to conclude, "Subjects are clearly able to defy authority when obedience involves a serious risk to themselves."[17]

The clearest example from the Relationship condition illustrating participants' awareness that it was "not that necessary to keep going," comes from a father faced with the prospect of inflicting intensifying shocks on his own son.

Participant: "Wrong, I'm gonna give you 165 volts."
Learner: "Argh! Let me out of here […] I'm gonna rip this place up! Let ME OUT!"
Participant: "Now listen, he'll he'll do that too…you better let him out because he'll do it! […] we'll give you back your checks and let it go at

that, to hell with it because I'm not gonna have him get hurt. And he'll rip your equipment up."[18]

This effort to conjure up a polite and inoffensive means of stopping the experiment without having to engage in direct confrontation failed, however, with the experimenter insisting the participant continue (which he tentatively did). But, on receiving another incorrect answer, the participant found himself facing the same but slightly more intense, problem of having to inflict a 180-volt shock on his own son. At this point, the participant realized there was probably no conciliatory way of stopping the experiment. He hesitated for a moment, and the experimenter tried to push him, insisting that the experiment necessitated he continue. A confrontation was probably the only way out, and realizing this, the participant suddenly lost his composure and burst into a heated and occasionally incoherent tirade.

> *Participant*: "I DON'T GIVE A GOD DANG WHAT 'THE EXPERIMENT REQUIRES.' IF SOMEONE'S GETTING HURT AND HOLLERING THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS ANYONE GONNA MAKE CONTINUE WITH [*sic*] SO DON'T GIVE ME THAT LINE OF HOOLEY IF IF YOU'RE GETTING AN EXPERIMENT AND IT'S HURTING YA [mumble] THAT'S GONNA MAKE YOU CONTINUE WITH IT—*SO DON'T GIVE ME THAT LINE OF HOOLEY. I'M NOT SO DUMB THAT I DON'T KNOW THAT.* AND AS I SAY, YOU CAN HAVE YOUR TWO DAMN CHECKS BACK! IF HE'S GONNA HOLLER LIKE THAT I'M NOT GONNA KEEP GOING THROUGH WITH IT!"
> *Experimenter*: "You have no other choice Teacher."
> *Participant*: "WHAT DO YA MEAN I HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE!"
> *Experimenter*: "If you don't continue we're going to have to discontinue the entire experiment."
> *Participant*: (suddenly calming down) "Discontinue the entire thing! I ain't gonna have my boy; would you have your boy hollering in there like that?"
> *Experimenter*: "Well we'll have to discontinue, may I ask you a few questions....?"
> *Participant*: "I'm not going to sit there, after all that's my boy, and I'm not gonna sit [mumbles]."[19]

As the father repeatedly emphasized, the experiment's requirement that he continue was a "line of Hooley." Although he had never attended high school, his lack of formal education did not prevent him from

knowing that he did not *have* to continue. He was aware that he had choices, one of which was to stop participating.

But a participant did not have to be related to the learner in order to appreciate the inappropriateness of shocking another person. It was actually common for participants in the non-Relationship conditions to repeatedly seek verification from the experimenter on the need to inflict more shocks.[20] As Milgram noted when discussing historical examples of so-called obedience to authority, "Indeed, the repeated requests for authorization are always an early sign that the subordinate senses, at some level, that the transgression of a moral rule is involved."[21] Thus, it is likely that most participants in the New Baseline condition were just as capable as those outside the experiment of identifying the moral inappropriateness of inflicting intense shocks. As one participant later admitted, "I was surprised to learn that I did a thing even though *I knew it was wrong to do it*" (italics added).[22] "It's left me with a guilty feeling," said another participant.[23] Although not all participants were as willing to admit to having engaged in wrongdoing, such admissions are consistent with Milgram's finding that 36.3% of participants who completed held themselves most responsible for inflicting every shock.[24] In reference to all the non-Relationship conditions (and somewhat like Milgram's own moral dilemma), Alfonso Damico understood the situation well,

> most revealing…is not the inability of…subjects to understand the difference between right and wrong—anxiety was often the most visible emotion—but their failure to care about the difference in a way that would have made it the controlling factor in their behavior.[25]

This assertion is true, with the exception of the then unpublished Relationship condition, which provided many examples of genuine concern for the learner's well-being, followed by resolute and intractable defiance.[26] But, as in the New Baseline, when it came to a powerless victim who was also a stranger, most participants—who, despite their preference to not hurt an innocent person—ended up siding with the needs and desires of the more powerful—the Yale experimenter. Again, these experiments are, broadly speaking, about the powerful figure's (Milgram) application of their greater power over his less powerful helpers (and, in turn, the less powerful helpers' application of their somewhat lesser power over an apparently powerless learner strapped firmly in an electrified chair).

Damico's conclusion that most participants in the New Baseline were aware that they were engaging in wrongdoing obviously conflicts sharply

with Milgram's notion of the agentic state, where those who inflicted every shock were (apparently) not concocting an alibi when they later defined themselves as "instrument[s] for carrying out the wishes" of a higher authority. Instead, I would argue, however, that most participants defined themselves in this way not because they genuinely believed they had little or no choice, but because they *preferred* to do so (over the option of not doing so). Put differently, the experimenter was not, as is commonly thought, trying to override the participant's personal values (harming an innocent person is wrong); the experimenter was actually pitting the participant's self-interest (to avoid an awkward confrontation) against doing the right thing. Thus, with the locus of control is in the participant's court, they make a choice. Recalling Hilberg: they must decide to turn the bureaucratic wheel. The New Baseline participants clearly wanted to help the learner, but doing so unfortunately detracted too much from their self-interests.

At some level Milgram may have come to sense the importance of the issue of self-interest. In an interview with Carol Tavris well after the completion of the research, Milgram was asked, "Are there any ideas you had that you now especially [*sic*] wish you had carried out?" Milgram responded "Only one, really....in retaliation."[27] If participants knew that the learner would later have the option to retaliate with shocks of their own, how might they have chosen to resolve the moral dilemma confronting them?

If, indeed, participants were *unwilling*, as opposed to Milgram's "unable," to act on their convictions,[28] how could so many prioritize such a seemingly trivial desire to avoid an awkward confrontation with the experimenter over what may have been an innocent person's life? Most did so because of the cunning psychological trap inherent within Milgram's basic experimental procedure, which subtly injected a strong dose of ambiguity into the issue of responsibility for harming the learner.

The Responsibility Ambiguity Generated by Milgram's Psychological Trap

What follows is an overview of what Milgram called his "web of obligation"—a veritable psychological trap that promoted responsibility ambiguity and subtly tempted most participants in the New Baseline condition into choosing to harm instead of helping an innocent person. Admittedly, this section is more conceptual and speculative than strictly empirical. Despite this, however, what follows will help bridge the gap between Milgram's perplexing results and the theoretical drought that has plagued them.

To ensure all participants at the start of the experiment sided with the experimenter over the learner, Milgram initiated the New Baseline procedure with what Edward Erdos terms the "persuasion phase."[29] The experimental procedure bombarded participants with an array of strain resolving mechanisms and subtly coercive binding factors that encouraged them to remain within the *Zone of Indifference* and repeatedly side with the experimenter over the learner. For example, the experimenter began by giving the participant a "general talk" where he told him "how little scientists know about the effect of punishment on memory"[30]—thus, he was participating in important, ground-breaking research. By doing so, the experimenter attempted to morally invert the infliction of punishment from something bad (hurting an innocent person), into something good (aiding science). The experimenter—presumably a knowledgeable social scientist—hinted at the central importance of the typically eager participants' contribution to this important Yale University study.

Furthermore, the $4.50 payment participants received probably intensified their general eagerness to please the experimenter, and also likely ensured participants felt at least somewhat obligated to meet their contractor's expectations.[31] Each participant then received a 'test shock' of slightly higher voltage than the first few shocks administered to the learner. As a result, participants probably regarded these early shocks as pretty harmless. But at the participant's slightest hesitancy to continue, the experimenter readily responded with the first prods: "Please continue," and "the experiment requires that you continue." Probably because of the participant's general naivety about the experiment's actual destination, the experimenter's persuasive and pushy expectations, and the learner's muffled reactions to the "light" shocks, every participant in the New Baseline condition inflicted the first few shocks.

The cumulative force of this initial barrage of binding factors would have created tension in the participant, who would have been aware they were inflicting light electrical shocks on a restrained person with a mild heart condition. These sources of stress in the early stages of the experiment generated what Russell and Gregory term "*experimenter over learner strain disequilibrium*,"[32] where the participant experienced the strain generated by the experimenter as more stressful (intense) than that generated by the learner's barely audible reactions to being shocked. This imbalance placed the experimenter at the center and the learner at the periphery of the participant's emotional universe, as illustrated in Fig. 8.2.

At this early stage, participants were likely keen to avoid the strongest source of their own pain—the experimenter's pushy request that they
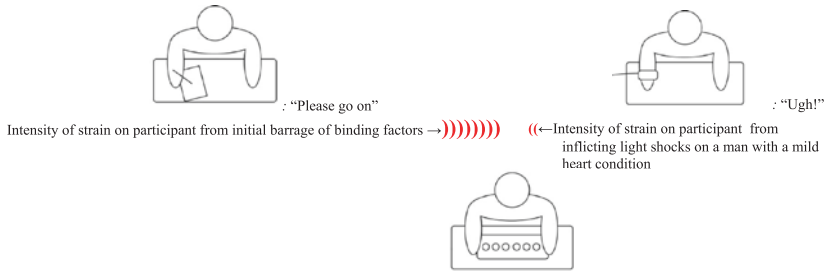
Fig. 8.2 Experimenter over learner strain disequilibrium

continue and the risk of confrontation associated with refusing to do so. All participants went on to inflict more shocks, which caused the learner's cries of discomfort to intensify. Although aware of the learner's pain, every participant in the New Baseline experiment inflicted the first six shocks (15–90 volts), meaning all participants fulfilled the most important criterion of the 'foot-in-the-door' phenomenon: compliance with one or several small requests which, unbeknownst to them, were to be followed by far greater ones.[33] As Gilbert explained, the foot-in-the-door phenomenon may have had,

> two important consequences: (a) it engages subjects in committing precedent-setting acts of obedience before they realize the "momentum" which the situation is capable of creating, and the "ugly direction" in which that momentum is driving them; and (b) it erects and reinforces the impression that quitting at any particular level of shock is unjustified (since consecutive shock levels differ only slightly and quantitatively).[34]

And Milgram's actually "multiple feet-in-the-door" effect—many small and almost imperceptible steps in an increasingly radical direction[35]—may have encouraged what psychologists term "shifting baselines…" This is where a person suspects that "everything had basically stayed the same, even though fundamental change had occurred."[36] Having committed to the experiment, and starved of time to reflect on their actions due to intensifying pressure to inflict more shocks, participants struggled to anticipate the "ugly direction" they were headed in. Milgram was not exaggerating when he described the start of the experiment as akin to being "thrown into a swift-flowing stream […] The individual, upon

entering the laboratory, becomes integrated into a situation that carries its own momentum."[37]

A participant who resisted the experiment's bureaucratic momentum at this early stage would likely have experienced a self-conscious feeling of being uncooperative and difficult. For participants—as with every other link in the Obedience-study organizational chain—there was a strong feeling that to get along one needed to go along. After the first six shocks, however, the learner's reactions to being "shocked" rapidly intensified.

105 volts Ugh! (louder)
120 volts Ugh! Hey, *this* really hurts.
135 volts Ugh!!

Around this point in the experiment, the learner's stressed reactions started to affect participants' emotional universe. Many expressed concern, disbelief, and confusion. This increasing sensitivity to the learner's pain caused a shift in the balance of experimenter–learner strain disequilibrium toward the learner. To bring the participant back to his side, the experimenter delivered a curt repetition of the first and second prods. If the participant failed to fall into line, the experimenter turned to the much more forceful third and fourth prods to re establish a favorable imbalance: "It is absolutely essential that you continue," and "You have no other choice, you *must* go on." In all, but one case, he was successful. Despite disapproving facial expressions indicative of tentative shifts beyond their *Zone of Indifference*, 39 out of 40 participants went on to inflict the 135-volt shock.

On some participants, the second wave of forceful binding prods may have also had a strain resolving effect. To this point, the experimenter had basically railroaded participants into inflicting the first set of shocks. Some participants may genuinely have perceived themselves to be victims of a cruel experiment, since only the experimenter desired that shocks be inflicted. As a result, in the fog of responsibility ambiguity, these participants may have come to regard the experimenter—not themselves—as solely responsible for any harm done to the learner. And, if a participant genuinely did not *feel* responsible for the learner's pain, then that participant is also unlikely to have felt the strain that normally accompanies such responsibility. Like many people who believe themselves to be victims, many participants' first reaction was to neutralize the greatest source of *their* pain—in this case, the experimenter's more forceful prods. To neutralize the pain of the experimenter's prods required

choosing to continue to inflict more shocks. But doing so, of course, only drew them deeper into the experiment.

However, as the intensity of the learner's reactions to the shocks intensified, the harder it became for participants to continue viewing themselves as victims. Because the participant was the person flicking the switches, they were obviously the most direct cause of the learner's "pain." Still, participants were also likely aware that they would never have inflicted the shocks of their own accord. After all, it was not the participant but the experimenter that "required" that they continue, said it was "essential," and that they had "no choice." As the experiment progressed, participants likely no longer perceived themselves as victims, but neither were they likely to have viewed themselves as perpetrators. Such a subtle change in self-perception could have stimulated a shift in responsibility perception from none to some, but as long as they regarded the experimenter as *mostly* responsible, most participants continued to inflict more shocks. Not feeling most responsible, participants were unlikely to believe it was up to them to stop the experiment. And so most continued a little further up the shock board.

Again, the learner's reactions intensified. It was only a matter of time before the growing stress generated by the learner eventually matched the constituent strain the experimenter generated through his verbal prods. When these stresses fell into balance, the participant reached a point of "strain equilibrium,"[38] as illustrated in Fig. 8.3.

Strain equilibrium marked a watershed moment for participants. It was at this point they were most likely to question the judiciousness of their earlier decisions to side with the experimenter. Though individual differences would have caused variations in precisely when participants arrived at the point of strain equilibrium, for many it occurred upon or

: "The experiment requires that you continue"

(strain from more intense prods)→))))))))))))

: "Ugh!!! That's all..."

(((((((((((←(strain imposed by a learner complaining of a heart condition)
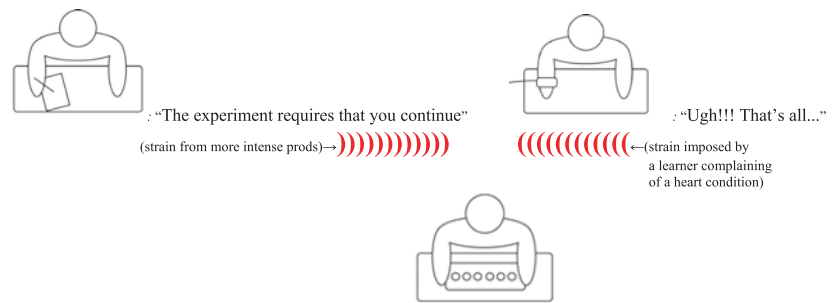
Fig. 8.3 The point of strain equilibrium

soon after having inflicted the 150-volt shock. "Ugh!!! Experimenter! That's all. Get me out of here. I told you I had heart trouble. My heart's starting to bother me now. […] I refuse to go on. Let me out." For many participants, the intensification of the learner's reaction, and the sudden mention of heart difficulties, made the 150-volt switch a pivotal juncture in the procedure.[39] Participants could no longer construe the shocks as "probably" harmless. From this point onwards the close relationship between cause (flicking switches) and effect (the learner's heightened "shock" reactions) ensured that the majority of participants *felt* most responsible for what was happening. Suddenly, participants could no longer view themselves as innocent victims, but instead as perpetrators implicated in the pursuit of wrongdoing.

From the 150-volt switch, and at each subsequent switch thereafter, participants faced an acute moral dilemma. Was it more important to help the experimenter collect a full data set, *or* was it more important to stop inflicting painful electric shocks on an innocent person complaining of heart trouble? If they chose to end the experiment, the learner's "pain" would cease. However, doing so would necessitate confronting a predictably frustrated Yale scientist. A simultaneous means of meeting the demands of both the experimenter and the learner was not apparent.

For a minority of participants, the solution to the moral dilemma was simple: stop the experiment. For example, after inflicting the 150-volt switch, one participant adamantly refused to inflict another shock. The experimenter unleashed his barrage of prods, but to no avail,

> *Experimenter*: It is essential that you continue the experiment.
> *Participant*: No it isn't essential. Not one bit.
> *Experimenter*: You have no other choice teacher.
> *Participant*: Oh, I have a lot of choices. My number one choice is that I wouldn't go on if I thought he was being harmed.[40]

This participant's resolution of the experiment's inherent moral dilemma may sound to outsiders like the obvious course of action. The participant had passed the point of strain equilibrium and moved on to "learner over experimenter strain disequilibrium."[41] Learner over experimenter strain disequilibrium describes the point in the experiment where the learner's pained reactions surpassed the maximum strain intensity the experimenter's consistent verbal prods were capable of imposing on a hesitant participant, as Fig. 8.4 illustrates.

: "It is absolutely essential that you continue."

: *"Ugh! Get me out… I've had enough."*

Peaked strain from prods →)))))))))))   ((((((((((((((((← Strain from a screaming learner
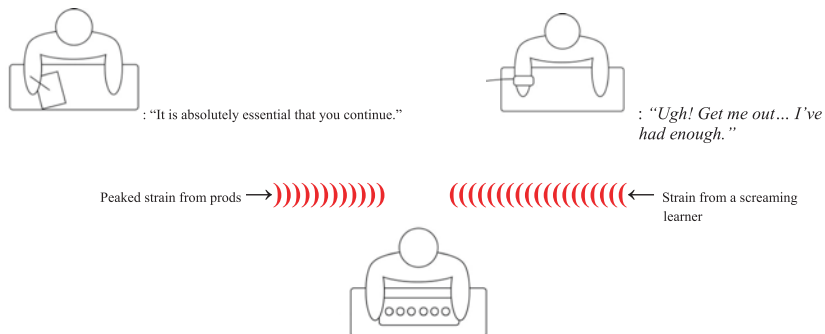
Fig. 8.4   The point of learner over experimenter strain disequilibrium

The longer participants remained in learner over experimenter strain disequilibrium, the more likely they would feel responsible for the learner's painful experience. Their flicking of switches was clearly causing the learner's reactions. Powerfully bolstering these intense feelings of personal responsibility—termed responsibility clarity—were the experimenter's increasingly implausible-sounding prods. It was clearly not "essential" that excruciating shocks be inflicted on an innocent person with a heart condition. There was obviously another "choice" available—stop "harming" the learner. As learner over experimenter strain disequilibrium intensified with each subsequent shock, the more agitated and nervous most participants became. At this point, participants were at a heightened risk of firmly situating themselves outside their *Zone of Indifference* and thus categorizing the experimenter's demands as totally unacceptable. Yet, despite all this, most—33 out of 40—chose to continue inflicting more shocks. It is this stage in the experiment that tends to leave outside observers flummoxed: why would so many participants put themselves through such torment when all they had to do was stop the experiment?

During the critical period of learner over experimenter strain disequilibrium, most participants appeared unsure what to do. They did not want to keep shocking the learner, but nor did they want to engage in a direct confrontation with the experimenter. Reluctant to engage in a confrontation, however, some participants perhaps developed a vested interest in believing that the experiment indeed "required" them to continue, that it was "absolutely essential" they go on, and that they had

"no other choice." Other participants may have stalled as they contemplated their options. Whether participants engaged in self-deception or hesitated, both made the same mistake: they allowed themselves to be drawn a little further in, moving a few more steps up the shock board.

Jan Rensaleer (pseudonym) who clearly sensed the "ugly direction" he was drifting, was one such hesitant participant.[42] Deep into learner over experimenter strain disequilibrium, he suddenly chose to resist Milgram's fast-flowing stream. Facing the 255-volt switch, he finally resolved the moral dilemma hounding his conscience by deciding to side with the learner. "Oh, I can't continue this way; it's a voluntary program, if the man doesn't want to go on with it." The experimenter responded by delivering the first four verbal prods, ending in his insistence that Rensaleer had no choice in the matter. "Well, I won't," said Rensaleer, "I *do* have a choice […] Why don't I have a choice? I came here on my own free will."[43] With Rensaleer holding firm, the experimenter had no option but to concede defeat and stop the experiment.

According to Eckman, stopping the experiment this far along the shock board was far more difficult than outside observers can imagine:

> To interrupt a behavioral sequence one has already set in process implies that one has made a bad decision, and is responsible for having behaved wrongly in all the completed steps of that sequence. On the other hand, to continue without stopping allows the individual to view the authority as responsible for the (in)correctness of both the past and present behavior. The problem is, in a sense, a product of all-or-nothing, either-or thinking: If I admit that this behavior, now, is wrong and that I have the power to change it, then *all* the behaviors I have performed from the beginning of this sequence are wrong, and I must accept responsibility for them. (Italics original)[44]

As Rensaleer said, "I think I've gone too far already, probably." After the experiment he conceded that, "I should have stopped the first time he complained…"[45] Instead, Rensaleer chose to continue, even though he was aware that, as he climbed the shock board, he was being drawn into doing something he sensed was wrong. When he finally decided to stop the experiment, Rensaleer knew that such a decision would come with consequences; he would have to accept total responsibility for having inflicted all the previous shocks:

When asked who was responsible for shocking the learner against his will, he said, "I would put it on myself entirely." [...] "One of the things I think is very cowardly is to try to shove the responsibility onto someone else. See, if I now turned around and said, 'It's your fault...it's not mine,' I would call that cowardly."[46]

As Bauman observes, "The trap is...a paradox: *one cannot get clean without blackening oneself*" (italics original).[47]

Rensaleer's experience touches on the central hook in Milgram's experimental procedure. As participants in learner over experimenter strain disequilibrium began to feel responsible for hurting the learner and started to contemplate stopping the experiment, they also realized that doing so would require engaging in an awkward confrontation with the experimenter. But, with every assertion that continuing was "essential" and the participant "had no choice," the experimenter subtly offered a tempting (albeit immoral) way out. The prods implied that the experimenter would accept all responsibility for the participant's actions. Rensaleer sensed, then rejected this offer, because he came to the conclusion that it was a "cowardly" resolution to the moral dilemma before him. Instead, he believed he should confront the experimenter and stop the experiment. But, of course, to do so required that he admit that he (not the experimenter) was ultimately responsible for inflicting harm on the learner. Having said this, up until the 255-volt switch Rensaleer may have been attracted to the opportunity to avoid a confrontation and hide his guilt, even though he eventually mustered sufficient strength to resist it. As another "disobedient" participant said, he (much like Rensaleer) "had the 'guts' to refuse to continue."[48] Overall, however, 80% of participants instead chose to sweat, stutter, and bite their lips through the midway stage (150–300-volt range) of the New Baseline experiment.

For this 80% of participants, the prods planted a dark seed: the experimenter did not seem to believe the participant was responsible for inflicting shocks on the learner. Thus, ambiguity appeared to surround the issue of responsibility. All a confrontation-fearing participant needed to do to displace responsibility on to the experimenter was to pretend that they genuinely believed what the experimenter was telling them. Implied within the prods was the subtle message that participants could avoid responsibility for what they knew was an immoral solution to their moral dilemma, and they could do so likely with impunity. Thus, *only they would know about their shameful choice* (or so Milgram led them to

believe). As Milgram said earlier about why he thought Asch's (and later, his own) experiment was "Great": the participant believes "that the conflict with him is a purely private issue which concerns no one but him[-self], and of which all others are totally unaware. He dares not betray his secret, yet by his actions, he is betrayed."

While some participants seemed to resolve their internal conflict by capitalizing on the opportunity to deceive others by claiming they genuinely believed the experimenter's increasingly implausible prods,[49] others in a state of hesitation seemed to resolve the moral dilemma by trying to conjure ways of stopping the experiment without having to engage in direct confrontation with the experimenter (which is more specifically why, as Akerlof argues, many participants procrastinate with a "plan to disobey in the future").[50] These participants, it seems, complied with the experimenter's first four coercive prods in the hope that, with a little more time, they might devise a polite and inoffensive exit strategy that would please both the experimenter and the learner. Rochat is, in part, correct that, "It was obvious they were all looking for a way to get out of the experiments."[51] However, participants did not seek just any way out; the way out had to be polite and inoffensive. For these participants, the problem was "how to become disengaged from a situation which is moving in an altogether ugly direction."[52]

Of course, what these participants did not know was that during the many pilot experiments, Milgram had already encountered the most common exit strategies that participants would typically invent. He was, thus, able to anticipate what most participants were likely to say during the official experimental series. Accordingly, he had pre-armed his experimenter with special prods carefully designed to neutralize polite attempts at extrication. For example, as the learner's screams intensified, many participants politely enquired about the effects of the shocks, perhaps sensing it would be fair to stop if the learner was being harmed. But the experimenter curtly dismissed such enquiries and tried to relieve the participant of their concerns by responding, "Although the shocks may be painful, there is no permanent tissue damage, so please go on." Confrontation-fearing participants could, if they accepted this reply, go on to inflict more shocks safe in the knowledge that they could do so with probable impunity. Karen Dontz (pseudonym), after inflicting the apparently excruciating 330-volt shock, responded to this special prod with, "I'll continue, providing it's not dangerous."[53] If it later turned out the shocks to be as dangerous as the learner's hysterical reactions

clearly suggested they were, Dontz could assuage her guilt (reducing learner over experimenter strain disequilibrium) with the knowledge that she could be blamed only for trusting the experimenter's word—*he* said there would be no permanent damage. The experimenter had successfully injected enough responsibility ambiguity into the situation to entice Dontz into inflicting more shocks. He had also provided her with a solution to her moral dilemma that conveniently avoided any confrontation or the shouldering of personal responsibility. Thus, the experimenter's words allowed Dontz to ignore the learner's cries, even though they explicitly suggested the shocks were, indeed, causing tissue damage. Perhaps Dontz genuinely trusted the experimenter's words that the experiment was not dangerous. If true, it must also be accepted she would have reacted the same way had the learner been a relative.

When other participants tried to politely stop the experiment by pointing out that the learner did not want to continue, the experimenter responded with a different special prod: "Whether the learner likes it or not, you must go on until he has learned all the word pairs correctly." Some participants then tried to nullify their contract by offering to return their $4.50 check. To this, the experimenter responded with the special prod: "The money is yours to keep regardless."[54] Milgram had all the most obvious exits covered so that the only way out for participants was to continue inflicting more shocks or suddenly engage in a direct confrontation.

After the 345-volt switch apparently rendered the learner unconscious, some participants, though not Dontz, felt it prudent to enquire into the lines of responsibility. Since the participant was actually inflicting the shocks, naturally, should the experimenter refuse to accept total responsibility, they (the participant) would have had at their disposal an inoffensive means of extrication: they had to pull out because they could not afford to shoulder the negative consequences for somebody else's—the experimenter's—experiment. However, to such responses the experimenter cut this exit strategy off by explicitly accepting total responsibility: "I'm responsible for anything that happens to him. Continue please." Somewhat similarly, other participants seemed to seek an explicit assurance from the experimenter that if they continued, they would not be held responsible for the consequences of their actions. One such participant was Fred Prozi (pseudonym). At 180 volts, Prozi both placed a tentative foot outside his *Zone of Indifference* and expressed awareness that he was responsible for his contributions: "I'm not going

to get that man sick in there. […] I refuse to take the responsibility […] who's going to take the responsibility if anything happens to that gentleman?"[55] For Prozi to continue, the experimenter had to be willing to accept full responsibility (something Prozi probably suspected he was unlikely to do). But, instead, the experimenter did just that leaving Prozi more entrapped than before, unless he was willing to engage in a direct confrontation. "All right […] (*Subject shakes head, pats the table nervously*)."[56] He flicked the next switch. Later in the experiment, after the learner stopped screaming, Prozi stated, "Something's happened to that man in there."[57] He then seized the opportunity he had earlier sensed might enable him to both avoid having to engage in a confrontation and evade responsibility for his seemingly harmful actions: "'You accept all responsibility?' EXPERIMENTER: 'The responsibility is mine. Correct. Please go on.'"[58] Prozi again continued. He had been persuaded into completing and then entered what Erdos terms the "after capitulation phase" of the experimental procedure—a full-fledged commitment to side with the experimenter.[59] But even so, Prozi did not really believe the experimenter was responsible for his harmful actions ("I'm not going to kill that man"). But like all who accepted this particularly powerful special prod, he wanted to believe it because, although he would have to inflict more shocks, doing so enabled him to avoid a confrontation and responsibility for his actions. So even when participants like Prozi knew early on in the procedure that they were doing wrong according to their own moral sensibilities, the prods provided them with the opportunity to displace that responsibility on to the experimenter.

Other participants were more creative in their avoidance strategies. As mentioned already, some participants would place greater vocal emphasis on the correct answers when announcing the word pairs.[60] As Milgram noted, "These subjects are willing to undermine the experiment but not to cause an open break with authority."[61] But, of course, unbeknownst to these participants, the automated learner responses ensured a regular supply of incorrect answers and these participants only ended up inflicting more shocks. As Bauman astutely observes, the more participants tried to escape the deeper they were drawn into Milgram's experimental quagmire.

> Everyone who once inadvertently stepped into a bog knows only too well that getting oneself out of the trouble was difficult mostly because every effort to get out resulted in one's sinking deeper into the mire. One can

even define the swamp as a kind of ingenious system so constructed that however the objects immersed into it move, their movement always add to the 'sucking power' of the system.[62]

Whatever confrontation-avoidance strategies participants deployed, all eventually came to realize that a non-confrontational means of stopping the experiment probably did not exist. The only way to help the learner was to stand up to the experimenter and refuse to continue. By the time the participant arrived at this conclusion, however, Milgram's trap was already set: What would they do? Would they forcefully resist the experimenter's demands and accept personal responsibility for having inflicted as many shocks as they had? Or would they cave to temptation—capitulate—and accept the experimenter's increasingly explicit offers to shoulder total responsibility for their harmful actions? In his notes, Milgram captured in one eloquent sentence the essence of his progressively cunning experimental paradigm. "The experimental set up relies…on *seduction*, the systematic ensarement [*sic*] of the subject into a web of obligation and uncritically from which he is unable to escape."[63] Most participants were already at least halfway along the switchboard and therefore deeply entangled in Milgram's psychological "web of obligation." Having come so far, the easiest option for them was to capitulate fully, though not enthusiastically, and, thanks to the fog of responsibility ambiguity, *choose to feel not responsible* for the consequences. Eckman writes,

> to continue without stopping allows the individual to view the authority as responsible for the (in)correctness of both the past and present behavior. […] if I carry out the orders of the authority now, then *he*, not I, must be responsible—for *all* the actions I have taken here. (Italics original)[64]

From the start, participants in the Obedience studies were encouraged not to *feel* responsible for their contributions to a harmful process. And once drawn into the process, participants' choices to inflict more shocks were bolstered by the experimenter's prods, which incrementally and cumulatively lulled them into thinking that they could at least avoid *appearing* responsible for making their harmful contributions. For many participants the last special prod, where the experimenter explicitly stated, "I'm responsible," was most powerful, because it enabled them to avoid a confrontation, absolved them from moral and legal culpability,

and explicitly reassured them that they could probably inflict further shocks with total impunity. Sufficiently tempted into remaining within the *Zone of Indifference*, they continued.

Moreover, by initially encouraging participants not to feel, and then gradually leading them to suspect that they might also not appear to others present, responsible for contributing, the basic experimental procedure and the experimenter's many coercive prods tapped into the same base anxiety of confrontation avoidance. For many participants, it was easier just to continue inflicting shocks, and, should anyone later inquire into the issue of responsibility, they could always fall back on the fog of responsibility ambiguity and blame someone else for their actions. As one participant candidly admitted during his debriefing, "I thought the 'shocks' might harm the other 'subject' however, I mentally 'passed the buck' feeling the one running the experiment would take all responsibility."[65]

THE EMERGING ISSUE OF GUILT

What becomes apparent is that because the division of labor made the displacement of responsibility and bureaucratic momentum possible, it single-handedly injected a great deal of responsibility ambiguity into every link in Milgram's organizational chain. Therefore, the division of labor probably played an important structural role in drawing every functionary into performing their essential roles. Because, however, the participant was uniquely required to (ostensibly) electrocute an innocent person, a simple decision on their part to not feel or appear responsible for performing their part of the process was easier said than done. Learner over experimenter strain disequilibrium intensified the stress experienced by participants so much that they could not easily rid themselves of the feelings of guilt that resulted from knowingly engaging in wrongdoing simply by telling themselves or others that they were not responsible, as illustrated in Fig. 8.5.

Eventually, some participants could no longer hide the stress they felt from repeatedly choosing what they knew to be the wrong course of action. Consequently, these participants often sought out their own means of reducing learner over experimenter strain disequilibrium. For example, when some participants reached the high end of the switchboard, they began to anticipate the learner's protests, talking over them, and thus neutralizing the intensity of his pained appeals. This

: "You have no other choice."

: "*(Intense and prolonged agonized scream.) . . . Let me out. . . My heart... You have no right to hold me here...!"*

Plateaued strain from prods →

Strain from learner's agonized screams
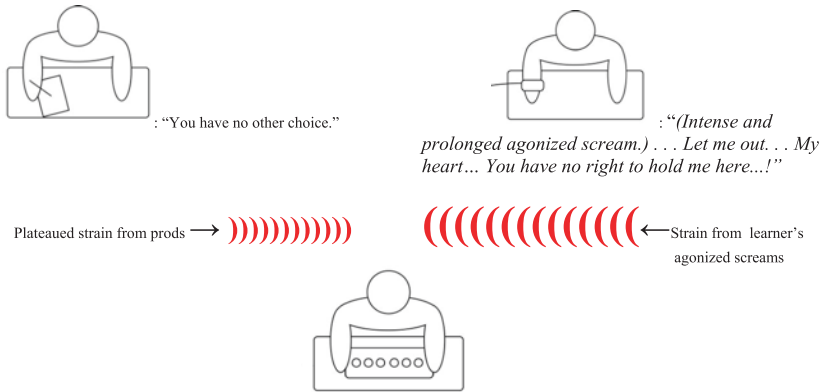
Fig. 8.5 The extreme imbalance of learner over experimenter strain disequilibrium around the 300–330-volt switch, where the strain imposed by the learner onto the participant overshadowed the maximum strain that the experimenter was capable of generating with his verbal prods

neutralization arguably reduced the imbalance in strain generated by the learner, making the now muffled screams psychologically easier to deal with.[66] As mentioned, in the pilot runs, some participants had averted their eyes from the learner, whom they could see through a translucent screen. When looking away, participants seemed to find it easier to deliver more shocks. Milgram termed such behaviors "avoidance," whereby "the subject screens himself from the sensory consequences of his actions."[67] Avoidance was a type of strain resolving mechanism, and those who engaged in it did "not permit the stimuli associated with the victim's suffering to impinge on them […] In this way, the victim is psychologically eliminated as a source of discomfort."[68] As an observer of the experiment noted about one such participant, they looked away from the learner because, "it caused them discomfort to see the victim in agony."[69] The participant's greater concern with reducing the intensity of their own pain illustrates that something very selfish lay at the root of their decision to continue inflicting more shocks. These participants, however, were unlikely to have interpreted their continued participation as selfish. Instead, they only continued to inflict shocks because it was (apparently) necessary. And as the participants' typically pained reactions illustrated, they were clearly a delicate, sensitive, caring, and therefore, *relatively speaking*, moral person.[70] That is, only an immoral sadist would

look at the person they "had" to shock. Again, their pained reactions illustrate these participants were greatly concerned about the learner, although (to use Damico's words) clearly not enough for that concern to become a controlling factor in their behavior.

Like other participants who decided to resolve the moral dilemma confronting them by repeatedly siding with the experimenter, those who partook in avoidance knew they were engaging in wrong doing. The problem confronting them, however, was one of cause and effect. Much in the spirit of the previously mentioned second type of bureaucrat, these participants did not want to know about the harm they were inflicting, preferring to remain intentionally ignorant. As far as they were concerned, if nothing physically cued them to the effects of their actions, then they could (like the other more distant links in the bureaucratic chain) pursue harm-doing with an almost total disregard for the consequences. By placing the victim out of sight, it became easier to keep him out of mind. Such avoidance demonstrates that some participants in the "after capitulation phase" found it necessary, from the *bottom-up* of the wider hierarchical chain, to invent their own strain resolving mechanisms (as opposed to the "persuasion phase" when, from the *top-down*, the experimenter supplied them). And it appears that these self-invented strain resolving mechanisms were—much as outlined in Gresham Sykes and David Matza's Techniques of Neutralization[71]—deployed with the purpose of nullifying the growing imbalance in learner over experimenter strain disequilibrium. The important consequence of such actions was that suddenly the experimenter from the top-down and participant from the bottom-up were *working together* as a team—the so-called "dual power process"—to overcome an obstacle impeding the achievement of Milgram's wider organizational goal that every shock be inflicted. That is, both parties worked together to better ensure the participant remained within their *Zone of Indifference* where they could continue doing as they were told.

Another example of a bottom-up, self-invented strain resolving mechanism promoting dual power team work was a responsibility-displacing technique referred to in social psychology as the "just world phenomenon."[72] As Milgram noted,

> Of considerable interest, however, is the fact that many subjects harshly
> devalue the victim *as a consequence* of acting against him. Such comments as,
> "He was so stupid and stubborn he deserved to get shocked," were

common. Once having acted against the victim, these subjects found it necessary to view him as an unworthy individual, whose punishment was made inevitable by his own deficiencies of intellect and character. (Italics original)[73]

One participant became "angry at the learner for being so slow and forcing me to shock him harder."[74] In demeaning the learner, these participants tried to convince themselves (and others present) that the learner was responsible for the infliction of shocks and, therefore, their own painful experience. Such mind games only extended the reach of responsibility ambiguity. As Staub says, "Blaming others, scapegoating, diminishes our own responsibility."[75] It should be noted that, unlike Milgram's theory, this interpretation accounts for why, during the post-experimental debrief, some participants blamed the experimenter, some the victim, and some, admitting they had caved under pressure, themselves.[76] It appears that some participants' ability to invent strain resolving excuses was only limited by the creative scope of their imaginations. Indeed, some participants even tried to conjure strain resolving justifications that displaced responsibility for their actions to targets beyond the experiment entirely. One participant in the post-experimental interview blamed the military for completing the experiment.

> *Participant*: "Guess I'm pretty good at obeying orders, I mean ahh, military service."
> *Milgram*: "What if he were actually being murdered in there?"
> *Participant*: "[Inaudible]"
> *Milgram*: "Well, why did you listen to this man [the experimenter] rather than the other guy [the learner]?"
> *Participant*: "Well, it's like I say, I'm used to taking orders. […] I've been through quite a bit of combat."[77]

But what is perhaps most disturbing is that some participants who completed the experiment, having pursued what they likely knew to be the wrong course of action, nevertheless left with their strongly positive self-image seemingly intact. This scenario is perhaps best illustrated by the case of Elinor Rosenblum, as previously noted, a self-styled pillar of the community. Not long into the experiment, she came up against the moral dilemma like everyone else, later admitting, "I was tempted so much to stop and to say: 'Look I'm not going to do it anymore.

Sorry. I'm not going to do it.'"[78] But she never translated her thoughts into action. Instead, it was easier for her to continue administering the shocks at the learner's expense. As a result of continuing to choose the path easiest for herself—and well aware of what that decision meant for the learner—she began to shake uncontrollably after the 270-volt switch. Perhaps fearing this nervous reaction might convey an awareness of wrongdoing, she tried to offer an explanation compatible with her positive self-image: "Must I go on? Oh, I'm worried about him. […] Can't we stop? I'm shaking. I'm shaking."[79] As Milgram observed, "She construes her expressions of tension purely as a sign of virtue: she was nervous because she cared about the victim."[80] Rosenblum failed to recognize that she was professing her heart-felt concern for a person on whom she nonetheless continued to inflict potentially lethal shocks. According to Roy Baumeister, such "bizarre rationalizations" involve a twofold process:

> First, the perpetrator wants very strongly to believe them. Second, they are superficially plausible enough that the person can accept them as long as he or she doesn't think about them very carefully. […] Such a combination is apparently necessary for biased thinking or self-deception in general.[81]

Although Rosenblum was tempted to challenge the experimenter, the most she was willing to do for the learner was surreptitiously try to sabotage the experiment. As she later said to the learner during the post-experimental interview, "Did you hear me stressing the [correct] word[?] I was hoping that you would hear me."[82] Rosenblum's admission that she tried to signal the correct answer to the learner only further invalidates her justification for completing the experiment—that she was just following orders ("It is an experiment […] So I had to do it. You said so").[83] If she were just following orders, why did she try to sabotage the experiment? On being told the learner never actually received any shocks, Rosenblum exclaimed, "You're kidding! He didn't get what I got. (She squeals) I can't believe this."[84] She then asked how other participants reacted, and the interviewer asked, "How do you think?". Rosenblum responded,

> Well, I tell you. The choice of me as a woman doing this...you certainly picked a pip. In my volunteer work, there aren't many women who will do what I do...I'm unusual; I'm softhearted, I'm a softy. I don't know how

> I as a woman stand in relation to the other women; they're a little harder than I am. I don't think they care too much. […] I don't think others would be as nervous as I.[85]

Again, Rosenblum construes her emotional tension as a sign of personal virtue. She is an excellent example of the type of participant who sees herself as moralistic, but ends up engaging in the same harm-inflicting behavior as the immoral, uncaring inflictors of harm. But through mental manipulation she conjured a way to feel good about potentially harming the learner.[86] Somewhat terrifying is that Rosenblum is a good person who does "not know they are not good."[87] In the end, she failed, or refused, to see how her actions spoke louder than her words. And in a questionnaire filled out months later, Rosenblum (who exclaimed "You're kidding!" and then squealed when informed the experiment was fake) once more relied upon her capacity for (self-?) deception, claiming her "'mature and well-educated brain' had not believed the learner was getting shocks."[88] Although beyond the scope of this book, these kinds of mind games, which serve to provide stability to a clearly unwarranted positive self-perception, hint at the possibility that some participants may have relied upon cognitive dissonance.[89] Summarizing Baumeister's (and others) research on evil and self-deception, Steven Pinker notes that many of us seem to have a "conscious spin doctor" that even when fulfilling a perpetrator-type role, tends to promote the positive self-perception that we are good and others are bad.[90] As Slater observed, "The power of Milgram's experiments lies, perhaps…in the great gap between what we think about ourselves, and who we frankly are."[91]

Other participants were more willing than Rosenblum to acknowledge the disconcerting gap between their positive self-image and their behavior during the experiment. One critically self-reflexive participant admitted,

> The thought also occurred to me that for a supposedly highly civilized and, in my mind, "soft-hearted" person I had carried the experiment on a lot longer than I should have were I as "soft hearted" as I had led myself to believe. (I try to make myself believe that it was because I had agreed to complete the experiment but without much success). It makes me wonder if I would be a real "resistance fighter" in the event that our country should ever find itself in the position of a France or a Denmark under occupation.[92]

Another participant observed,

> It has bothered me that I went all the way and obeyed the experimenter. At times I threatened to stop and refuse to go further, but I gave in and finished the experiment. [...] I consider myself better informed, and I hope more cultured then [*sic*] the average non-college graduate. [...] In spite of all this I gave the same performance that the average slob, taken off the street, would probably have done. I consider this frightening.[93]

And a third said of the experiment, "For me, personally, it was an awakening."[94]

Nonetheless, the responsibility ambiguity inherent in Milgram's carefully crafted "web of obligation," which gradually and subtly encouraged, urged, pushed, lured, and finally tempted most participants into choosing to harm instead of helping an innocent person, was a powerful corrupting force on many a participant's moral compass. It is tempting to blame structural forces for all this—Milgram's overarching structural trap—but as Sabini and Silver said, ultimately the individual is personally responsible for all that they do. From the organizational perspective, completing the experiment involves an interactive top-down and bottom-up *team* effort.

Moral Dilemmas

What implications does the above analysis have for the meaning of the Obedience studies? Because Milgram's psychological trap attempted to influence, manipulate, and ultimately corrupt his participants' moral compass, I believe, first and foremost, the Obedience studies were actually about how ordinary people resolve pressing moral dilemmas. Indeed, Milgram was aware of, and discussed at length, his participants' "conflict with conscience."[95] The problem is that, because of his flawed lens, Milgram always placed the concept of obedience at the center, and therefore resolution of a moral dilemma fell to the periphery of his analysis. In my view, resolution of a moral dilemma *precedes* the so-called obedience to authority—which was actually just an excuse that enabled participants to avoid having to shoulder responsibility for their actions and resolve, in their favor, the dilemma forced upon them. This change in focus has significant implications for the applicability of Milgram's findings beyond

his laboratory. Consider, for example, Slater's insight which does not once mention the word Obedience,

> …when I first heard of the Milgram experiments…I knew I could do such a thing […] The impetus lay within me, like a little hot spot. […] How often had I, have *you*, heard a racial slur and said nothing in order to keep the peace? How often have I, have *you*, seen something wrong at work, maybe a mistreated colleague, and done nothing so your own job stays steady? The little hot spot travels inside us. Certain situations may make it glow brighter, and others dimmer, [it is] the moral failing that lies at the heart of so many humans… (Italics original)[96]

Who among us can say with a straight face that they have performed admirably during all such encounters? Interestingly, some of Milgram's own research into the personality traits of his participants reinforces the assertion that the Obedience studies were primarily about the resolution of a moral dilemma. Milgram had Elms' extract "personality data" from the participants "for just about every scale of the MMPI [Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory]." Although Elms "didn't get significant differences on any of the twelve standard scales," he did find one that registered—"The only one that did differ noticeably was intended to measure 'social responsibility' (Gough et al., 1952); defiant volunteers were more responsible…"[97] Again, it seems the key to the resolution to the moral dilemma at every link in Milgram's organizational chain is that individuals shoulder, and not be tempted to opportunistically spurn responsibility for their harmful contributions.

If Milgram's laboratory studies were really about how ordinary people resolve moral dilemmas, perhaps, although it is beyond the scope of this book, Roy Baumeister's research on evil[98] and, especially, Albert Bandura's concept of moral (dis)engagement[99] holds the theoretical key to better understanding the "(dis)obedience" Milgram encountered? Keeping in mind Rosenblum's "feel good" mental acrobatics during and after having inflicted every "shock," as Bandura argues:

> mechanisms of moral disengagement have been examined most extensively in aggressive conduct. But selective disengagement of moral control is by no means confined to extraordinary inducements to aggression. People often experience conflicts where behavior they personally devalue can serve as the means for securing valued benefits. As long as self-sanctions override the force of external inducements, behavior is kept in line with personal

standards. However, in the face of strong external inducements, such con-
flicts are often resolved by selective disengagement of self-sanctions. This
enables otherwise considerate people to perform self-serving activities that
have detrimental social effects.[100]

More explicitly, through his restructuring of the social and informational
field, perhaps what Milgram engineered during the Obedience stud-
ies was moral disengagement, as captured in the (semi)controlled labo-
ratory setting. And, as I have argued in the previous chapters, because
the Obedience studies greatly depended upon the potentially destructive
bureaucratic process, perhaps this tool of organization only heightens the
probability of moral disengagement. Bureaucracy heightens the probabil-
ity of moral disengagement largely because its division of labor enables
personal responsibility to be displaced elsewhere (pull) and its inherent
rules and regulations structurally encourage (push) all functionaries to
ignore moral or human implications that might stem from them "just
doing" their "job."

Conclusion

It was not difficult for Milgram to convince his many specialist helpers
to fulfill their necessary roles in his stress-inducing experiments, thanks
largely to the responsibility ambiguity offered by the displacement of
responsibility and momentum inherent in the bureaucratic process.
Ensuring, however, that most participants—the last links in the chain—
performed their specialist duties, including (ostensibly) rendering an
innocent person (at least) unconscious, was a far greater challenge. What,
then, accounts for most participants' shock-inflicting actions? In short, it
seems that most completed the experiment in order to avoid having to
engage in a confrontation with the experimenter. As with Milgram and
his many helpers, most participants did what was asked of them because
they stood to gain personally.

It is difficult, of course, for outsiders to comprehend how most par-
ticipants could have completed the experiment on the basis of such a
seemingly trivial and clearly selfish motivational force. But most fail to
consider Milgram's psychological "web of obligation," which presented
participants with a tempting, yet corrupting, solution to the prob-
lem confronting them: if they did as they were told and inflicted more
shocks, they could conceivably blame the experimenter (or others) for

their actions. The experimenter's prods lured participants to suspect that, despite a private awareness that inflicting shocks on an innocent person was wrong, they may not have appeared to others as responsible for the learner's pain. If participants could maintain the appearance that they did not believe themselves responsible for their actions, they could both avoid a feared confrontation and absolve themselves in the eyes of others from any legal and moral culpability for going on. And thus, they could inflict shocks with apparent impunity. In short, *the basic procedure made unethical choices easy and ethical choices both difficult, and even personally burdensome.* Milgram's web of obligation was indisputably a powerful force in promoting responsibility ambiguity among most of his participants. Of course, when participants took advantage of this responsibility ambiguity, they became like every other acquiescent link in the chain: they could blame someone else for their actions.

Several chapters in this book give the impression that the power of binding factors and strain resolving mechanisms are cumulative: the more Milgram added to his psychological trap, the greater the probability he had of injecting responsibility ambiguity into the last link in his organizational chain, thereby maximizing the completion rate. This is generally true, but for one caveat: the shock generator. This was a singularly powerful source of influence, so powerful, in fact, that it provided the foundation that Milgram's psychological trap depended on. If that foundation collapsed, the web of obligation along with the responsibility ambiguity it engendered would, as the following chapter illustrates, have crumbled to impotence.

Notes

1. Quoted in Russell and Gregory (2011, p. 508).
2. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2306.
3. Milgram (1974, pp. 6, 41).
4. Milgram (1974, pp. 42–43).
5. Milgram (1974, pp. 42–43).
6. Lutsky (1995, p. 58).
7. Reicher et al. (2012) argue that the competing inhibition precluding disobedience was not, as Milgram argued, "orders," but the experimenter's appeals, as a leader, to the ideology of science. Consequently, most "obedient" participants ended up identifying with the experimenter's scientific goals—research investigating the effects of punishment

on learning—and, in support of their Identification-Based Engaged Followership theory, that is why most followed along with his desires that every shock be inflicted. This is, in my view, an important piece of the puzzle, but it is not an answer in itself. One significant problem that highlights this theory's over-simplification of what took place is that it fails to explain why, as Milgram observed with regularity, some participants attempted to covertly sabotage the experimenter's scientific study (for example, by vocally emphasizing the correct answer to the learner or by failing to fully depress the shock switches), as they went on to inflict every shock. Consider, for example, Elinor Rosenblum who said to the learner during the post-experimental interview, "Did you hear me stressing the [correct] word[?] I was hoping that you would hear me" (Milgram 1974, p. 82). Yet, when the experimenter asked her why she inflicted every shock, she told him "It is an experiment […] So I had to do it" (p. 83). Participants like Rosenblum should not have tried to sabotage the experiment of a person whose leadership and ideological goals they apparently identified with (see Milgram 1974, p. 159; Perry 2012, pp. 196–197; Russell 2009, pp. 152–153).

8. Milgram (1974, p. 150).
9. Miller et al. (1995, p. 9). As Hamilton and Sanders (1999, p. 227) note, "The costs essentially involved coming to grips with the experimenter and saying "No." Participants had to "make a scene" to get out of their dilemma." See also SMP, Box 46, Folder 168 and Perry (2012, p. 260).
10. Russell (2009, p. 77).
11. Rochat and Modigliani (1997, p. 238).
12. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2425.
13. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2422.
14. "[I]f this was a complete stranger in here, to me, ahrr it would be much easier to continue on" (SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2426; see also Audiotapes #2428 & #2438).
15. Meeus and Raaijmakers (1995, p. 164).
16. Meeus and Raaijmakers (1995, pp. 164–165).
17. Meeus and Raaijmakers (1995, p. 164). This experiment should not be seen as sharing similarities with Milgram's waiver of responsibility, because the legal waiver in the original study was purposefully ambiguous (focusing on the somewhat distracting issue of payment for the participant's time), and downplayed the risk of harm by suggesting the experiment was not dangerous.
18. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2435.
19. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2435.
20. Milgram (1974, pp. 49, 51, 53, 73–76, 77–78, 80, 84, 86). For an example that conflicts with this account, see pp. 45–47.

21. Milgram (1974, p. 187).
22. SMP, Box 44, Divider: "Problems", #2321. Somewhat similarly, "Some subjects assert that they refuse to take responsibility for harming the victim, while at the same time equally refusing to transfer responsibility to the experimenter. They assert, 'I am responsible for what happens to this man, but responsibility implies choice, and I chose to disobey'" (SMP, Box 46, Folder 171).
23. SMP, Box 44, Divider "9", #2013.
24. Milgram (1974, p. 203).
25. Damico (1982, pp. 424–425).
26. Another such example was after a participant had inflicted a 150-volt "shock" on his friend. The friend responded in pain, causing the participant to hesitate. The experimenter then told the participant it was "absolutely essential" he continue. Ignoring the prod, the participant stood up from his chair and tried to make his way to his friend in the adjacent room. On encountering a locked door, the participant demanded of the experimenter, "You gonna open up the door?" Sensing the seriousness of the situation, the experimenter failed to perform his duty and issue the final prod, "You have no other choice" and, seemingly fearing for his personal safety, instead responded, "We'll have to discontinue the experiment" (SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2424). See also SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2421, #2425, #2440.
27. SMP, Box 71, Folder 314.
28. Milgram (1974, p. 148).
29. Erdos (2013, p. 123).
30. Milgram (1965a, p. 59).
31. Milgram (1974, pp. 148–152).
32. Russell and Gregory (2011, p. 503).
33. Freedman and Fraser (1966).
34. Gilbert (1981, p. 692).
35. Dolinski and Grzyb (2016, p. 277).
36. Neitzel and Welzer (2012, p. 13).
37. Milgram (1965a, p. 73).
38. Russell and Gregory (2011, p. 505).
39. Burger (2009) and Packer (2008).
40. Milgram (1965b).
41. Russell and Gregory (2011, p. 505).
42. Rensaleer was in Condition 2: Voice-Feedback.
43. Milgram (1974, p. 51).
44. Eckman (1977, p. 97).
45. Milgram (1974, p. 51).
46. Milgram (1974, pp. 51–52).

47. Bauman (1989, p. 158).
48. SMP, Box 44, Divider "14", #0837.
49. Milgram (1974, p. 77).
50. Akerlof (1991, p. 9).
51. Perry (2012, p. 380). As Milgram said himself in an undated document, "…there is a continual effort on the part of some subjects to "break out" of the role assigned to them by the experimenter" (SMP, Box 46, Folder 168).
52. Milgram (1965a, p. 73).
53. Milgram (1974, p. 77).
54. Burger (2009, p. 7).
55. Milgram (1974, pp. 73–74).
56. Milgram (1974, p. 74).
57. Milgram (1974, p. 75).
58. Milgram (1974, p. 76).
59. Erdos (2013, p. 123).
60. See, for example, Milgram (1974, p. 82).
61. Milgram (1974, pp. 159–160). Other participants tried to "administer the briefest shock possible. Handling strain in this manner was easier than defiance. It permits the maximum expression of individual benignity within the constraints of an oppressive system. But there is an element of self-delusion in this type of minimal compliance. It does not challenge authority. It may diminish but does not nullify the exercise of authority's will and is chiefly important as a balm to the subject's conscience" (Milgram, 1974, p. 159).
62. Bauman (1989, p. 157).
63. Quoted in Russell and Gregory (2011, p. 508).
64. Eckman (1977, p. 97). An excellent example of such a participant was Carl (pseudonym), a participant in the Relationship condition. Carl did not want to shock his friend, but neither was he eager to get into a heated confrontation with the experimenter. Consequently he exploited every possible avenue he could envision that might allow him to stop harming his friend without offending the experimenter. That is, first he tried to emphasize the correct word-pair answer when communicating to the learner through the microphone. Then he offered to return his $4.50 check, followed by an idea to swap positions with the learner. Finally, he attempted (but failed) to fool the experimenter by only pressing the electric shock switches halfway down. Exhausted by the experiment's sucking power, finally Carl conceded and inflicted every shock on his friend. During the post-experimental interview but before being dehoaxed, Carl was seething with anger "It's what I figured, some fuckin' idiot tests!" Soon afterwards Carl alluded

to the kind of confrontation that he could not muster (an unnecessarily radical one) when he asked the experimenter: "All I can say is, as a researcher, has anybody ever physically attacked you?" (Perry 2012, pp. 196–197). Was Carl furious with the experimenter or, realizing he had been seduced into immorally resolving the experiment's inherent dilemma, was he angry with himself?

65. Quoted in Russell and Gregory (2011, p. 508).
66. See Russell and Gregory (2011, p. 509).
67. Milgram (1974, p. 158).
68. Milgram (1974, p. 58).
69. Milgram (1974, p. 34).
70. Welzer (2012, pp. 14–15).
71. Sykes and Matza (1957) argue conventional teenage criminals often rely on several self-initiated psychological techniques to neutralize personal feelings of guilt for committing crime. These include the denial of responsibility (the displacement of blame); denial of injury (diminution of harm doing); denial of the victim (blame the victim); condemning the condemners (highlighting other party's worse transgressions); or appeal to a higher loyalty (the pursuit of an apparently greater purpose). See also Alvarez (1997, pp. 152–153).
72. Lerner (1980).
73. Milgram (1974, p. 10).
74. Quoted in Russell and Gregory (2011, p. 510).
75. Staub (1989, p. 17).
76. Milgram (1974, pp. 203–204).
77. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2433.
78. Milgram (1974, p. 83).
79. Milgram (1974, p. 80).
80. Milgram (1974, p. 83).
81. Baumeister (1997, p. 307).
82. Milgram (1974, p. 82).
83. Milgram (1974, p. 83).
84. Milgram (1974, p. 82).
85. Milgram (1974, p. 83).
86. In a similar way, when we throw litter into a bin we have been socialized to feel good about it—relative to throwing litter on the ground, we are doing the right thing. But because much of our rubbish will end up in a hole in the ground and eventually pollute the ground water (poisoning future beings), the relatively moral act of throwing rubbish in the bin is actually no different to those "immoral" people who litter. Again, the only difference is that we feel good about engaging in the

same harm-inflicting behavior. And because we feel good about throwing rubbish in the bin, we are probably less likely than people who litter to reflect on just how much rubbish we are polluting the environment with. Again, the disjuncture between cause and effect makes harm-doing psychologically easier to deal with, and consequently our capability to guiltlessly pollute and thus harm others increases enormously.

87. Reinhold Niebuhr quoted in Kühl (2016, p. 58).
88. Milgram (1974, p. 84).
89. Festinger (1957) and Aronson (1969). See also Seibel (2005, pp. 350–351).
90. See Pinker (2011, pp. 488–497).
91. Slater (2004, p. 40).
92. Quoted in Russell and Gregory (2011, p. 511).
93. Quoted in Russell and Gregory (2011, p. 511).
94. Quoted in Russell and Gregory (2011, p. 511).
95. Milgram (1974, p. 3).
96. Slater (2004, p. 63). On a similar note, Harold Herzog (1993) has written about his experience as a graduate laboratory assistant tasked with killing a variety of animals for scientific purposes. Although his experience, which he interpreted as a moral dilemma, obviously had nothing to do with obedience to authority, he repeatedly noted its uncanny resemblance to many of Milgram's participants' behavior.
97. Elms (1972, pp. 130–131). See also Burger et al. (2011). That defiant participants were socially more responsible lends some weight to De Swaan's (2015, p. 14) observation that the Obedience studies in fact did tap into the participants' personal dispositions: those that refused to complete the experiment did so for clear reasons (typically because, as shown, they perceived themselves as the main causal agents controlling the infliction of harm and, because of these feelings, they felt uncomfortable about displacing elsewhere responsibility for what they perceived to be their actions). However, because the percentages of defiant participants unwilling to displace responsibility differed wildly across Milgram's many different variations (ranging from 100 to 7.5%), the experiments obviously involved a very powerful situational component. Clearly Blass is right: Milgram's results are due to both situational and dispositional forces. Therefore, an "interactionist" middle ground best accounts for the Obedience studies (De Swaan 2015, p. 28). On this front, clearly more research is needed.
98. Baumeister (1997).
99. Bandura (1990).
100. Bandura (1990, p. 194).

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The Shock Generator: The Most Powerful Single Factor in the Obedience Studies

Suppose I ask the question: how fast can a man move relative to the earth. You might say: perhaps 15 miles per hour at most. […] But it is also true that a man can move at 600 miles an hour <u>if he is in an airplane</u>. This is not intended as a bad joke, but…as a possibly useful analogy. For it must be that the psychiatrists [approached to predict the Obedience study results] are—so to speak—looking at the man walking down the…isle of an airplane, while forgetting that the airplane is in motion. Thus they say he is…an[d] has the potential to move only at 15 miles an hour, because they fail to consider the framework in which he is functioning.

　　—Stanley Milgram, March 1962[1]

Milgram regarded the shock generator as an "important" supplied strain resolving mechanism.[2] However, relative to his obsession with obedience to authority, he never considered it of critical significance: "The precise mode of acting against the victim is not of central importance."[3] Although the shock generator was not a sufficient condition capable on its own of generating the New Baseline experiment's high 65% completion rate, its absence would likely have rendered the Obedience study a complete failure. As we shall see, at the last link in Milgram's organizational chain, no other single variable could stimulate responsibility ambiguity like the shock generator; a device that I would argue was the single most powerful strain resolving element in the entire experimental paradigm.

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Even so, the shock generator has drawn virtually no critical attention in the Obedience-study literature. For example, the shock generator does not get a mention in Burger's list of the top four social features contributing to Milgram's high baseline completion rate or Zimbardo's top-ten lessons from the Obedience studies.[4] Yet, whenever the shock generator is paid the slightest attention, the insights offered are revelatory. The shock generator is undoubtedly the hot air in the Obedience-study balloon. That it has, for over half a century, evaded attention in what is perhaps the most well-known of psychology experiments is testament to the aphorism that sometimes what one is looking for can be found right under one's nose. Even controversy over attempts to generalize Milgram's findings beyond the laboratory almost disappears when the shock generator is given the undivided attention it deserves.

The shock generator has two characteristics that distinguish it from the other strain resolving mechanisms Milgram deployed. First, it, *not* the participant, generated the force that inflicted blows apparently strong enough to render the learner (at least) unconscious. Second, the shock generator inflicted these intense blows in the total physical absence of the participant. This second characteristic separated "the act" of flicking switches from the harmful "effect" on the learner, ensuring, as Milgram noted, that "the victim's suffering possesse[d] an abstract, remote quality for the subject."[5] The machine rendered harm-doing almost theoretical. Because the participant both helped to strap the learner into the chair and then received a sample 45-volt test shock, each one was "aware, but only in a conceptual sense, that his actions cause pain to another person…"[6] The physical separation of cause from effect prevented participants from initially *feeling* (perceptually) and then *appearing* as responsible as they in fact were for their "harmful" contributions. Illustrating the shock generator's enormous power is the fact that manipulating its two distinctive characteristics of inflicting powerful blows and doing so in the participant's total physical absence—generated the widest disparities in rates of completion.

This fact is shown in the only variation Milgram ran that capitalized on, and maximized, the shock generator's ability to directly inflict forceful yet remote blows—the Truly Remote Pilot study. In this pilot, the shock generator was set up in such a way that the participant never heard, could not see, and did not need to touch the person on whom three consecutive 450-volt shocks were ostensibly inflicted. Unique to this variation, the participant's contributions to goal achievement

resembled the technocratic, unemotional, and stress-free contributions of all the other functionary links further up Milgram's organizational chain. The shock machine acted as a physical barrier enabling the participant to circumvent the immense stress of a "street level" bureaucrat burdened with directly implementing an inhumane policy. Policy transmission was delivered electronically, invisibly, and perhaps seemingly unintentionally. Unburdened by empathy or guilt caused by the learner's reactions, participants became entirely susceptible to the superordinate experimenter's attempts to persuade, tempt, or coerce through his array of other strain resolving mechanisms and binding factors. Although he never recorded the precise completion rate of the pilot, Milgram noted "virtually all subjects…went blithely to the end of the board."[7]

But then, across the four conditions of the Proximity Series, Milgram rearranged the set-up of the shock generator so that participants were exposed to the auditory, visual, and eventually, the tactile consequences of their actions. As conceptual awareness of harm-doing was reinforced with more and more perceptual information, it became harder for participants to convince both themselves and others present that they were not responsible. For an increasing proportion of participants across the Proximity Series, their sense of personal responsibility for the learner's experience became much stronger and eventually unavoidable (Remote—heard some banging on wall: 35% refused to complete; Voice-Feedback—heard all verbal reactions: 37.5% refused to complete; Proximity—saw and heard all reactions: 60% refused to complete). As perceptual clarity increased (and, conversely, responsibility ambiguity diminished), the ability of participants to deny responsibility for their harmful actions decreased. As a result, an increasing percentage of participants in the Proximity Series felt a compelling obligation to stop the experiment.

Of all Milgram's variations, it was the last of this series, the Touch-Proximity condition, which most diminished the shock generator's ability to physically shield participants from the perceptual consequences of their actions. Participants were not only *conceptually* aware that they were causing pain but they were also *perceptually* aware—seeing, hearing, and feeling a man screaming in pain. In the Touch-Proximity condition, the relationship between cause and effect was no longer ambiguous. Forcing the learner's hand on to the shock plate made it difficult for participants to convince themselves, and especially others present, that they were not responsible for inflicting harm on an innocent person (70%

refused to complete). As Bauman argues, "If harming a person involves direct bodily contact, the perpetrator is denied the comfort of unnoticing the causal link between his action and the victim's suffering. The causal link is bare and obvious, and so is the responsibility for pain."[8]

What might have seemed like a plausible justification for continuing during the Truly Remote Pilot—"I had to do it. You said so"—had become by the early stages of the Touch-Proximity condition implausible. Most participants, it seems, came to suspect that if blame were being apportioned, they could not convincingly rely on the excuse that they were "just following orders" or on any other justification, whether supplied or self-invented. Who would be gullible enough to believe them? Also, for most participants in the Touch-Proximity condition, a confrontation with the experimenter became a less stressful option than continuing to inflict further shocks. When most participants were faced with the prospect of having to touch the learner, responsibility ambiguity was not nearly as available as it had been to those in the Truly Remote Pilot. Consequently, the majority of participants in the Touch-Proximity condition felt obligated to extricate themselves from the experiment.

Before running the Touch-Proximity condition, Milgram "seriously doubt[ed] that many subjects will go along [*sic*] with the command for very long."[9] So he was surprised to discover that, even though a significant majority refused to complete, almost a third of participants willingly inflicted every shock. This result is less surprising, however, if one takes into account the fact that although the Touch-Proximity condition removed the shock generator's second characteristic (preventing physical participation), it fully retained its first characteristic (inflicting the forceful blows). This observation gives rise to a central question: what kind of results would Milgram have obtained in a variation that removed both characteristics? Though such a condition—which would necessitate the participant enter the learner's chamber and physically inflict harm directly—would be virtually impossible to design or implement, contemplating it highlights the centrality of the shock generator as a necessary condition in generating the New Baseline experiment's counter-intuitively high completion rate.

Punishing the learner with, for example, a fist would necessitate a physical connection between the participant and the learner, and more significantly, between the action and the direct physical effect of that action. Furthermore, participants would not only have to feel and, as a corollary, see and hear the implications of their actions, by the two-thirds

mark of the experiment, *they* would also have to produce a force of sufficient intensity to render the learner at least unconscious (as the 345-volt shock switch appeared to do). As Russell and Gregory note, "Under such conditions, there would have been no 'lack of unity.'"[10] In this situation, sole responsibility for one's harmful actions could no longer feel or appear ambiguous, and any self-interested personal benefits associated with continued participation would barely register in participants' minds. This was because the pained learner would sit at the center of the participant's empathetic emotional universe. Moreover, it would have been indisputably clear, even to a far greater degree than in the Touch-Proximity condition, who was responsible for inflicting harm. The responsibility ambiguity so readily available to participants in the Truly Remote pilot would have been replaced in a No Shock Generator condition with intense and undeniable responsibility clarity. It is for these reasons, of course, that Milgram dropped his early idea to have the participant "Slug" the learner when designing the experiment—a physical assault was no means to his end of maximizing the baseline completion rate.

In fact, the shock generator was so important to Milgram's high completion rates that its removal would have rendered nearly impotent every other binding factor and strain resolving mechanism in the basic procedure. Participants who physically struck the learner with immense force and then later claimed responsibility lay elsewhere ("just following orders"), that science required they do it, that the experimenter said they had "no other choice," or that the experimenter assured them that the punishment would not cause permanent damage, would all be revealed as lying to themselves and to others. Thus, it seems it was the shock generator that injected power and plausibility into all of the other binding factors and strain resolving mechanisms. Even the foot-in-the-door phenomenon—praised by many as a central force in the Obedience studies[11]—would have come to nothing without the shock generator. Milgram certainly sensed this, as illustrated by his early dumping of his foot-in-the-door-like idea to have participants "Tap" then "Slug" the victim.

It would appear, then, that despite all the other binding factors and strain resolving mechanism Milgram employed, the shock generator was the key force generating nearly all of the responsibility ambiguity experienced by participants. And in the shock generator's absence, the participant would have become *physically* the last human link in the Obedience

studies bureaucratic chain, a position from which he could not have experienced the responsibility ambiguity that Milgram's psychological trap so heavily relied upon. That is, the absence of the shock generator would have rendered Milgram's carefully designed web of obligation almost completely ineffectual. For participants, the shock generator was *the* ultimate and single most omnipotent source of responsibility ambiguity. Arguably, it was the shock generator's "lack of unity" that injected sufficient indifference into the "obedient" participants' *Zone of Indifference*. That is, compared to an experimenter demanding participants physically beat the learner, asking that they instead flick some shock switches appeared to be a reasonable request one might expect to encounter in a psychology laboratory.

I therefore suspect that the psychiatrists whom Milgram asked to predict the results of the basic procedure failed so spectacularly because they neglected to consider the shock generator's immense and unnatural strain resolving power. As Milgram intuitively senses in the chapter epigraph, the psychiatrists failed "to consider the framework" the participants functioned in. Perhaps their prediction that one in a thousand people would complete would have proven more accurate in a No Shock Generator condition, where only individuals on the "psychopathic fringe" would agree to personally inflict such harm. Such a No Shock Generator condition and the Truly Remote Pilot would produce completion rates of virtually none to virtually all respectively. Thus, the shock generator was the most powerful variable in the Obedience studies, enabling the 65% baseline completion rate.[12]

An undated document in the Yale University archives illustrates that Milgram came to this conclusion himself. However, because of his unrelenting belief that the experiments were, in some way, about the power of "obedience to authority," he immediately dismissed the idea's importance.

> in the re[m]ote condition…[the] causal relatio[n]ship between lever and punishment is precarious. It becomes [s]urer as more an[d] more of one[']s senses are enlisted in the act of obedience and as those senses are brought closer to the causes they are supposed to have. A good general princi[ple] might be that as the causes of one[']s actions are brought into [a] closer relationship with their consequences, we take more responsibility for them. We feel more responsibility for them. It is only when cause is split from consequence, (not logically, or course, but psyc[ho]logically) that we can

get terrifying obedience. [B]ut this is the typical functioning of obedience. Let us stop trying to kind [*sic*] ourselves; what we are trying to understand is obedience of the Nazi guards in the prsinon [*sic*] camps…[13]

Again, Milgram's obsession with obedience led him to a theoretical dead-end. And because so many different strain resolving mechanisms and binding factors were involved—foot-in-the-door, financial contractual agreement, Yale's institutional power, ideological belief in science, and so on—he had to account for what must have seemed like an endless array of possible explanations. Milgram admitted, "The problem…seems not to be a deficiency of explanation but a surplus of it."[14] His failure to realize that not all strain resolving mechanisms and binding factors were equal (and, most importantly, that none was singularly as powerful as the shock generator) helps explain his confusion surrounding why most people completed the New Baseline experiment. For my argument, however, the key role played by the shock generator provides the strongest foundation yet from which to generalize Milgram's findings to the outside world.

Generalizing Milgram's Results Beyond the Laboratory Setting

In *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, Dave Grossman provides one of the more successful generalizations of Milgram's Obedience studies to the outside world. Grossman observes that during the Proximity Series, the closer participants were to the learner, the lower the completion rate. Grossman then ranked various types of military weapons, showing that the greater the physical distance certain weapons separate soldiers from their intended human targets, the less resistance to killing they are likely to experience (Fig. 9.1).[15]

Grossman argues that resistance to killing diminishes with longer-range weaponry, because, much as the shock generator in the Truly Remote Pilot, this technology inhibits the stimulation of potentially powerful emotions like guilt, stress, trauma and, something not explored by Milgram, repugnance.

However, what really seems to be at play, rather than distance per se, is the relationship between resistance to killing (or shocking) and stimulation of an attacker's perceptual senses. In fact, some of Grossman's own evidence lends weight to this conclusion. For example, according
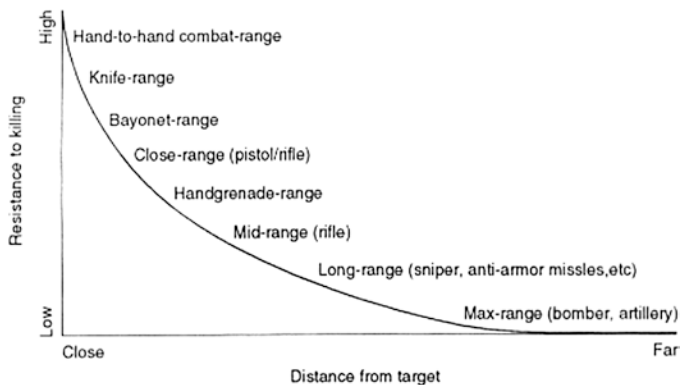
Fig. 9.1 Distance versus resistance to killing (© D. Grossman [1995])

to Grossman, during the trench battles of World War One, the grenade was one of the most popular weapons used against the enemy—that is, the grenade generated a lower resistance to killing than a gun, even though the latter typically puts more distance between killer and victim. According to the above graph, then, the hand grenade should generate a higher resistance to killing than a gun, but as Grossman explains, during a grenade attack, a soldier must shield his body behind cover and close his eyes and ears to avoid being injured by his own attack. As a result, "grenades were psychologically and physically easier to use" when killing, because "the killer does not have to look at his victims or hear them die."[16] Therefore, when it comes to resistance to killing, stimulation of the attacker's perceptual senses appears to be a more important variable than physical distance per se. This conclusion is reflected in the Holocaust. Gas chambers, as some scholars have argued, provided "technical distancing,"[17] however, in places like Auschwitz there were actually a "close-range" method of killing simply in terms of the physical distance separating German perpetrators from their victims (much less than two meters). But, as I show in Volume 2, the victims could not be seen, need not be touched, or barely heard by those most directly involved.

What I term the Killing Method Hierarchy synthesizes the concept of perceptual stimulation with many of Grossman's insightful observations, showing that the highest levels of resistance to killing involve methods

that require the greatest sensory contact, such as this martial arts technique: "punch a thumb through…[the victim's] eye and on into the brain, subsequently stirring the intruding digit around inside the skull, cocking it off toward the side, and forcefully pulling the eye and other matter out with the thumb."[18] Resistance would be very high in this instance because, to cause a fatality, attackers must directly and slowly feel, see, and hear their victim die. A sharp instrument used in a piercing action (a knife, for example) is likely to produce a lesser resistance to killing, though one greater than if a similar instrument were used in a slashing action. As Grossman writes, "To pierce is to penetrate, while to slash is to sidestep or deny the objective of piercing into the enemy's essence."[19] Next, a sharp instrument used in a slashing action is likely to produce a greater resistance to killing than a blunt instrument (like the butt of a rifle) used in a bludgeoning action, because bludgeoning does not require an internal attack. Blunt instruments used as bludgeon are likely to produce a greater resistance than a firearm, which generates the force of the blow, not the shooter. And although a firearm requires the person killing to see, and (depending on the distance) perhaps hear, the consequences, unlike all the previously mentioned weapons/methods, it does not require direct physical contact between the victim, the weapon, and the weapon's user. Therefore, with firearm, the attacker need not feel the victim. Finally, a firearm involving a direct fire projectile is likely to produce a greater resistance to killing than a firearm that issues an indirect fire projectile (where the projectile fired takes a curved or less direct path toward its target). Indirect fire projectiles, such as artillery, or in the case of intercontinental missiles, eliminate tactile and auditory stimulation and, depending on the distance and the weapon's course, can eliminate most, if not all, perceptual stimulation. It should be noted that this hierarchical ranking from high to low levels of perceptual stimulation, and thus resistance, also moves generally in a direction of slow to more instantaneous methods of killing.[20]

This Killing Method Hierarchy offers a heuristic device for understanding how and why some methods of killing appear psychologically easier to use than others (by ameliorating a range of inhibitory emotions such as guilt, trauma, and/or repugnance). Bourke writes,

certain forms of killing were less liable to incur guilt. This was particularly the case in the most anonymous forms of modern warfare. In aerial warfare, for example, there was a strong correlation between altitude and guilt

> […] Such anonymity in the slaughtering process even enabled the navigator of the Enola Gay, which dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, to deny any adverse emotional reactions: he claimed to have 'come off the mission, had a bite and a few beers, and hit the sack, and had not lost a night's sleep over the bomb in 40 years.'[21]

Obviously, this navigator was conceptually aware that his mission had just instantly killed tens of thousands of people. However, because the system of delivery successfully circumvented his perceptual awareness of all the human carnage his actions created, he was able to kill without actually feeling like he was killing.[22] As Philip Ardery, a US World War Two bomber pilot stationed in Europe, explained, "The brutality of heavy bombardment is highly impersonal. I was used to carrying out my mission four miles above the point of impact. It is difficult under those circumstances to get any feeling of injuring the enemy at all."[23] Consider, in contrast, an example of a method of killing from the opposite end of the hierarchical spectrum.

> An American who joined the Foreign Legion recalled bayoneting a 'young Fellow…as delicate as a pencil'. For months afterwards he could not sleep 'for remembering what that fellow looked like, and how my bayonet slipped into him and how he screamed when he fell.'[24]

In another example, an Australian by the name of I. L. Idriess describes a bayonet attack he observed at the first battle of Gaza in 1917. It was, "just berserk slaughter…the grunting breaths, the gritting teeth and the staring eyes of the lunging Turk, the sobbing scream as the bayonet ripped home […] Bayonet-fighting is indescribable…words are incapable of describing feelings."[25] The psychological reaction to the killing of just one person with a bayonet stands in stark contrast to the response felt by the American complicit in the nuclear attack on Japan which killed 200,000 people by 1950.[26] In a similar instance, Paul Montgomery, a member of an American B29 bomber crew that participated in the strategic firebombing of Japan—that in a two-day raid on Tokyo alone killed about a quarter of a million people[27]—noted the (apparent) moral gulf separating his actions from those using more personal forms of killing—"It's not like I was going out and sticking a bayonet in someone's belly, OK?"[28] Montgomery perceives his destructive acts as a lesser moral affront, and therefore relatively innocent, to killing one person with a

bayonet, probably because his technocratic role never *felt* like or, perhaps even more importantly, held the *appearance* of killing—he *just* pressed buttons. His participation in aerial bombing, a perceptually benign method of killing located at the end of a compartmentalized and carefully divided military bureaucracy, ensured he (much like all those other functionaries further up the bureaucratic chain) never had to directly kill anyone. He, like all other more distant functionaries, *only* indirectly killed civilians (albeit on a massive scale). And although this distinction made little difference to the victims, it was clearly of enormous importance to him, psychologically and morally.

The central importance of a goal-directed bureaucracy combined with a perceptually benign means of inflicting harm attached to its last link becomes most obvious when *both* factors are suddenly removed from the decision-making process of whether or not to perpetrate inhumanities. Consider, for example, Fisher's thought experiment, which seeks to prevent nuclear war by making the decision to launch such weapons perceptually intense and therefore personal:

> I proposed to place the code number in a little capsule that would then be implanted right next to the heart of a volunteer. The volunteer would carry a big, heavy butcher knife as he or she accompanied the president. If ever the president wanted to fire nuclear weapons, he [*sic*] would have to kill one human being personally and realize what an innocent death is. Blood on the White House carpet—it's reality brought home. When I suggested this to friends in the Pentagon they said, "My God, that's terrible. Having to kill someone would distort his judgment. The president might never push the button."[29]

The shock generator, aerial bombardment, and push-button technology, when attached at the end of a what was effectively a thoroughly Arendtian-like "banal" bureaucratic process, all make moral disengagement when harming others psychologically easier despite the button-pusher knowing (in concept) what they are doing. These tools enable the circumvention of perceptual reality and make total and automatic "avoidance" of reality possible, thus reducing the feelings and appearance of responsibility for those most directly involved in harm infliction. As a result, violent capabilities increase exponentially.

But surely such factors are inapplicable to the Holocaust because, as Goldhagen argued, Germans regularly engaged in primitive acts of brutal

violence and cruelty. Goldhagen, however, provides only six examples of *lethal* violence in his entire book where a direct physical connection was established between the German perpetrators, their weapons, and victims, causing the perpetrators to experience intense and unavoidable levels of tactile, visual, and auditory stimulation.[30] In fact, Goldhagen's own evidence illustrates that high tactile killing methods, for example stabbing with a bayonet, were readily available to the ordinary German functionary,[31] but, *relative* to gassing, shooting, and starvation, were rarely used to kill.

How, then, do we account for all the horrific anecdotes from Holocaust survivors of babies being bayonetted, or having their heads smashed into walls? And what about the killing of victims with one blow of the hand? Killings of this kind, involving weapons and methods high in perceptual stimulation indisputably occurred.[32] However, after the war when investigators were interviewing survivors, it would have been natural for them to describe the most horrific, frightening, and disturbing examples of violence they observed or even experienced. These descriptions, however, do not make these acts representative of how most victims died. In fact, Goldhagen only providing six examples in a book dependent on demonstrating such acts were extremely common is indicative of the reverse. Goldhagen's second and most resilient argument about gratuitous cruelty falls down because such violence was, in terms of lethal outcomes, rare even within the Nazi's most unsophisticated killing institutions.

The abnormality of perceptually salient acts of lethal violence is inadvertently touched on in one of Goldhagen's six examples. A survivor he quotes stated:

> "Wagner was a sadist. He would not only beat the women; that was done by all the SS men." Elsewhere, she provides a fuller description of Wagner's singularity, "He was active not with a gun, but with a whip, and he frequently beat the women so terribly that they died of the effects … In his sadism towards women, Wagner appeared to us to be absolutely abnormal; the other SS men, who held total power over us, were of course also very cruel, but were not sadistic in the same way as Wagner."[33]

This woman's words are supported by other survivors. Consider, for example, Primo Levi's observation about the work ethic of a fellow prisoner,

He works too much and too vigorously: he has not yet learnt our underground art of economizing on everything, on breath, movements, even thoughts. He does not yet know that it is better to be beaten, because one does not normally die of blows, but one does of exhaustion, and badly, and when one grows aware of it, it is already too late.[34]

Not only do perpetrator accounts support such assertions, Rudolf Höss also found the way the conventional criminals "knocked the French Jewesses about, tearing them to pieces, killing them with axes, and throttling them" to be "gruesome."[35] So too does some of the academic literature. In support of a physician imprisoned at Auschwitz who estimated that less than 10% of the SS were "abnormal," Kren and Rappoport note:

This observation fits the general trend of testimony by survivors indicating that in most of the camps, there was usually only one, or at most a few, SS men known for their intense outburst of sadistic cruelty. The others were not always decent persons, but their behavior was at least considered comprehensible by the prisoners. […] Ironically, there are many more stories of SS kindness to children in the camps than there are of special cruelties […] Our judgement is that the overwhelming majority of SS men, leaders as well as rank and file, would have easily passed all the psychiatric tests ordinarily given to American army recruits or Kansas City policemen.[36]

For a project as large as the Holocaust, the Nazi regime could not rely on a minority of sociopathic or psychopathic criminals or even trained and hardened killers. Instead, they needed a far more numerous source of helpers—ordinary, normal, and perhaps even squeamish people. And, as Volume 2 will show, the Nazis needed to invent a method of killing that—at the end of a highly compartmentalized and heavily divided bureaucratic process—these moderately antisemitic ordinary Germans would willingly use. And just as in the Obedience studies, the less touching, seeing, and hearing a method of harming involved, the easier it became for the Nazi leadership to persuade, tempt, or (if needed) coerce ordinary Germans into doing their dirty work.

Volume 1: A Summary and Theoretical Overview

Why most ordinary people completed Milgram's New Baseline experiment presently remains a mystery. I have suggested that instead of theorizing over a clearly complex end result, perhaps a more fruitful methodological approach might be to delineate, during the invention of the Obedience studies, Milgram's start-to-finish step-by-step journey of discovery. That is, I suggest it be determined how exactly he learned to obtain his New Baseline result. Understanding how Milgram arrived at his surprising baseline result might, I suggest, prove capable of shedding new theoretical light on these otherwise mysterious experiments. So, in short, how exactly did Milgram invent his New Baseline procedure and what new theoretical insights did his journey reveal?

After hearing many Nazis plead during their war crimes trials that, in perpetrating the Holocaust, they "only" followed higher orders, Milgram wondered if ordinary people in a harm-inflicting psychology experiment might also obey higher orders to hurt an innocent person. For such an experiment to garner scholarly attention, Milgram knew it would have to obtain eye-catching results (nobody would be surprised by a low rate of obedience to hurt an innocent person). So Milgram set out with a preconceived goal: run an experiment that would "maximize obedience…"[37] Because Milgram did not have a procedure capable of generating such a result, he had to invent one. Then, relying on forces he suspected caused the Holocaust—Nazi-like pledges of loyalty, strict obedience to harmful orders, and little steps toward a radical outcome—he envisioned a rather rudimentary basic procedure where participants were encouraged to accept a pledge to obey orders to engage in an escalating physical assault: "Tap" and eventually "Slug" an innocent person. Soon realizing this idea would unlikely achieve his preconceived goal to maximize obedience, Milgram applied his intuitive feel and drew on his previous experiences as a social psychologist to envision what he thought might better move him toward preconceived goal achievement. Two key innovations emerged: instead of a physical assault, Milgram sensed participants might more likely "harm" a victim if instructed to inflict (fake) electrical shocks using an emotionally and physically distancing shock device (effectively substituting unreliable human labor with a more predictable, controllable, calculable, and efficient source of nonhuman technology). Milgram also envisioned a more efficacious institutional justification for inflicting the shocks: by hurting the learner, the

participant would help establish "scientifically" whether or not punishment improved learning. Rather powerfully, this subtle procedural change morally inverted the infliction of harm on an innocent person into a commendable social good.

Although this experiment appeared a little less like the Holocaust captured in the laboratory setting, to test his emerging procedure's potential, Milgram had his students run a pilot study. Not only did these first pilots demonstrate the basic research idea's enormous potential—about 60% of people willingly administered the most intense shocks when an actor dressed as an experimenter instructed them to do so—Milgram also observed unanticipated participant behaviors that inspired new procedural innovations that he thought might move him even closer to converting his preconceived goal into a reality. Importantly, these improvements were beyond his intuitive feel, and past experiences of what he imagined might generate a high completion rate. For example, in the student-run pilot series, participants could see an outline of the learner through a translucent screen. The image of the pained learner clearly caused discomfort among many participants. To Milgram's surprise, however, some of these participants seemed to reduce the intensity of their own discomfort by physically turning away from the pained learner, and then continued to inflict further shocks. Thus, instead of Milgram from the *top-down* adding new manipulative techniques to the basic procedure that he imagined might increase participants' violent capabilities, from the *bottom-up* these participants were inventing their own such techniques. Inadvertently, these self-initiated actions helped move Milgram toward preconceived goal achievement. And perhaps even more importantly, after Milgram observed that participants found it distressful seeing their victim in pain, their stressed reactions caused him to wonder if introducing a solid wall to the next pilot series might cause the completion rate to increase beyond 60%. If Milgram was right, then introducing a wall into the standard procedure would bring him even closer to goal achievement.

More than half a year after running the first student-run pilot series, Milgram completed a second and more professional series of pilot studies. In the final variation of the second series, Milgram ran the "Truly Remote Pilot study," wherein having introduced a solid wall into the basic procedure, participants could neither see nor hear the learner's reactions to being "shocked." Milgram's hypothesis about the effect of a wall proved correct, because in this pilot "virtually all" participants

inflicted every shock.[38] The leap from a 60% completion rate in the student-run pilots to something approaching 100% in the Truly Remote Pilot saw Milgram achieve his preconceived goal of maximizing obedience.

So what becomes apparent during the invention of the Obedience studies is that Milgram's basic strategy to improving his emerging baseline procedure was to retain those innovative ideas that helped "maximize obedience" and abandon those that didn't. In fact, Milgram ended up terming his more effective manipulative techniques either Strain Resolving Mechanisms or Binding Factors. As mentioned, Strain Resolving Mechanisms are techniques designed to reduce the tension normally experienced by a person inflicting harm (for example, the shock generator and the experimenter's moral inversion of the infliction of harm into a socially commendable good). Binding Factors are powerful bonds that can entrap a person into doing something they might otherwise prefer not to do (for example, paying participants $4.50 for their time and the many small steps that led most participants to inflict intense "shocks" on an innocent person). It seems the more Strain Resolving Mechanisms and Binding Factors Milgram added to his emerging procedure, the cumulatively stronger his "web of obligation" became.[39]

The Truly Remote Pilot's maximized completion rate signaled that Milgram had likely developed a basic procedure that, should he use it as his first official baseline, it was likely that nearly all participants would inflict every shock asked of them. That is, the Truly Remote Pilot's high completion rate indicated he was finally ready to run the first official baseline—an experiment that would probably obtain a surprisingly high completion rate. Using Ritzer's terminology, over time Milgram had gained so much "control" over his participants' likely behavior that should he make his next trial the official baseline, he was able to roughly "predict" that it would obtain a high ("calculable") completion rate. Thus, he had found the most "efficient" means of arriving at his preconceived end.[40] A new "one best way" to preconceived goal achievement had emerged. And it was *past history*—Milgram's intuitive feel, past experiences, and his in situ observations of the pilot studies—that had, through a process of trial-and-error, gradually led him to the Truly Remote pilot's procedure. If Milgram wanted to achieve his preconceived goal in the first official trial, all his helpers—research assistants (Alan Elms and Taketo Murata), actors (John Williams and James

McDonough), *and* participants—just needed to follow the latest and most effective "rules and regulations."[41]

However, running an official baseline experiment that nearly all participants completed raised an unanticipated problem: such a result would deprive Milgram of any way of determining individual differences between participants.[42] Consequently, Milgram deemed it necessary to introduce a strain *inducing* force into the official baseline that he anticipated would slightly increase the proportion of disobedient participants. With the intention of reducing (slightly) the basic procedure's probable completion rate by increasing participant stress, Milgram decided that the first official baseline experiment would include some auditory perceptual feedback. That is, after the participant inflicted the 300- and 315-volt shocks, Milgram instructed his learner McDonough to kick the wall and then fall silent. In contrast with Milgram's repeated approach across the pilots to reduce participant tension (and increase their probability of inflicting every shock), the intention behind this procedural alteration was obviously to increase slightly their stress levels. Having increased participants' stress levels, he presumed a small proportion would refuse to complete the experiment. Clearly, Milgram had gained so much "control" over his participants' likely reaction to his experimental procedure that he was able to guess ("predictability") that this latest alteration would slightly reverse his otherwise rising completion rate.

On 7 August 1961, Milgram ran his first official baseline experiment, producing a 65% completion rate. Milgram was probably expecting a slightly higher completion rate considering he made only subtle changes (infrequent wall-banging) to the Truly Remote Pilot. Nevertheless, the still-surprisingly high completion rate, which garnered much media attention, became his "best-known result" and thus had its intended effect.[43] This was the rationally-driven and somewhat circuitous learning process that guided Milgram during the invention of his "one best way" to preconceived goal achievement.

In an attempt to develop a theory capable of explaining this baseline result, Milgram then undertook twenty-two slight variations, which he anticipated would gradually lead him, through a process of trial-and-error, to a theory of Obedience. He ended up making the fifth of these variations his "New Baseline"—the so-called "Cardiac" condition—which unlike during the first baseline, the learner's intensifying verbal reactions to being "shocked" could be heard by the participant up until the 330-volt switch (thereafter becoming silent). The disturbing (more

eye-catching?) New Baseline also obtained a surprisingly high 65% completion rate and went on to serve as the basic model for all subsequent variations. As Volume 1 shows, however, Milgram's attempt, during his many variations on the New Baseline experiment, to isolate the cause of obedience to authority failed. What, it seems, Milgram overlooked was not only the omnipotent strain resolving power of his means of inflicting harm but also the formally rational and inherently bureaucratic organizational machine that unobtrusively lay behind it.

In conjunction with his learning process, Volume 1 also revealed how Milgram, in the role of project manager, recruited his many specialist helpers. To achieve his preconceived goal and collect a full set of data, he required institutional and financial sponsors, along with the aid of several research assistants, actors, and technicians. All, it will be noted, agreed to become complicit in the unethical infliction of potentially dangerous levels of stress on innocent people. Milgram obtained their consent much as the experimenter did with the participants: Milgram convinced them that despite any ethical reservations they might hold, in order to "conquer the disease" of "destructive obedience,"[44] it was necessary they fulfill their specialist role. That is, in contributing to the infliction of intense stress on innocent people, they would help bring about a greater good. On top of morally inverting harm into a social good, Milgram further tempted all his helpers into performing their roles by appealing to their sometimes different self-interested needs or desires: the provision of financial reimbursement, organizational prestige, the offer of article coauthorship, and other material benefits. Eventually a cognitive thread of personal benefit connected every link in the emerging Obedience studies' organizational chain. Thus, as Milgram anticipated then applied the most effective motivational formula for each of his helpers, the nonhuman technology of bureaucracy started to take shape. In turn, the division of labor inherent in this organizational chain inadvertently ensured that—in the spirit of Hannah Arendt's "rule by Nobody"[45]— every functionary helper could, if they so chose, displace responsibility for their contributions to the harmful process elsewhere: I'm not most responsible, he is!

As Milgram and his helpers made their fractional contributions to organizational goal achievement, a physical disjuncture arose between individual roles and any negative effects. And this disjuncture could stimulate responsibility ambiguity among functionaries, which is a general state of confusion within and beyond the bureaucratic process over

who is totally, mostly, partially, or not at all responsible for a destructive outcome.[46] When the issue of personal responsibility becomes debatable, some functionaries may genuinely believe they are not responsible for the harmful end result. Responsibility ambiguity, however, can also encourage functionaries to sense opportunity amid confusion: they can continue to contribute to, and personally benefit from, participation safe in the knowledge that they can probably do so with impunity. In this case, the responsibility ambiguity across the bureaucratic process likely provided potent strain resolving conditions that made it possible, even attractive, for every link in the Obedience studies' organizational chain to displace responsibility for their harmful contributions. Because Milgram and his helpers either genuinely didn't feel responsible for the harm they contributed to, or (more commonly) realized that even if they did they at least probably didn't appear so, personal levels of strain subsided, clearing the ethical way to remain involved in the study.

At the end of the organizational chain, however, where voluntary participants were burdened with the specialist task of (ostensibly) inflicting harm on a learner, Milgram's first idea that they be encouraged to engage in a direct physical assault ensured for an undeniable connection between cause and effect. For the participants in such an experiment, the division of labor could not protect (compartmentalize) them from knowing—in both concept and perceptual reality—about the harmful effects stemming from their actions. For participants who might inflict this assault, responsibility clarity, not ambiguity, awaited. Achievement of Milgram's preconceived goal necessitated the inclusion of something sufficiently capable of separating cause from effect. The solution came when Milgram, as he frequently did, from the *top-down* of his (loosely) hierarchical organizational process (*first link Milgram instructed second link experimenter to pressure the final link participant into shocking the learner*) introduced the emotionally distancing and strain resolving "shock" machine (combined with his subsequent idea to separate participants from the learner with a translucent screen, or even better, a solid wall). It is important to note that the idea to introduce a wall was, as just mentioned, initiated by *bottom-up* forces within the Obedience study's wider organizational process: some participants during the student-run pilots looked away from the person they could see they were "harming." Interestingly, on their own accord, these participants were effectively inventing, then applying their own strain resolving means of better ensuring they could do as they were told. Participants, however, were

not the only lowly innovators: as shown, the experimenter quickly sensed what his boss Milgram likely desired and, in the hope of maximizing the completion rate, he (Williams) started inventing his own highly coercive binding prods.

Nonetheless, once Milgram introduced the combination of the strain resolving, nonhuman technologies of the shock machine *and* wall into the Truly Remote pilot, the participant became physically and emotionally disconnected—compartmentalized—from their victim, and suddenly, a strong dose of responsibility ambiguity became available to participants (an equivocal situation that would not have been possible in the absence of these nonhuman technologies). In fact, as argued, no other single variable could stimulate responsibility ambiguity like the shock generator, a device, when combined with the wall, was the single most powerful strain resolving element in the entire experimental paradigm. And when participants, as they did during the Truly Remote pilot, could no longer hear, see, or feel the implications of their actions, their specialist contributions to the wider process suddenly resembled the unemotional, technocratic, seemingly innocent, and somewhat banal contributions of all the other functionary helpers further up the organizational chain. With responsibility ambiguity suddenly available to every link across the organizational chain—where all felt and/or appeared to be *mere* middle-men—it suddenly became much easier to persuade, tempt, and, if necessary, coerce "virtually" all participants into performing their specialist harm-contributing roles.

And as responsibility ambiguity structurally *pulled* everyone into performing their specialist roles, simultaneously the coercive force of bureaucratic momentum—where, to avoid criticism for not doing one's job and/or to receive whatever self-interested benefits were associated with goal achievement, every functionary link felt structurally *pushed* into fulfilling their specialist "rules and regulations." An excellent example of bureaucratic momentum was initiated when participants accepted Elms' offer to partake in one of the experimental program's many variations and then selected, from the research schedule, one of the research programs' 780[47] discrete 60-minute slots. On doing so and later arriving at the laboratory to fill their slot, participants—much like a vehicle frame moving through Ford's factory—advanced through Milgram's data extraction assembly line. That is, within the tight one-hour timeframe, various members of Milgram's team sequentially engaged in specialist tasks that, among others, included training participants, running the experiment,

engaging in acting duties, collecting data, and undertaking typically insufficient debriefings. And much like on Ford's assembly line, because time was limited—another unsuspecting person was due at the top of the hour—all helpers felt the push of Milgram's participant-processing schedule (another nonhuman technology) into fulfilling their specialist roles.

At the last link in Milgram's data-extraction assembly line, participants were arguably also pushed by the force of bureaucratic momentum into fulfilling their specialist task; more specifically in the form of the experimenter's seemingly unrelenting application of standard and special prods—"Please continue" and "It is absolutely essential that you continue." Because these prods implied the experimenter was responsible for their actions—he was the only one requesting that shocks be inflicted—many participants sensed they could perhaps avoid the awkward confrontation necessary to stop an unethical experiment on behalf of a stranger and instead, just continue doing as they were told by flicking more switches with probable impunity. To confirm if this was indeed the case, some participants enquired into the lines of responsibility, to which the experimenter stated for the record that only he was responsible for the learner's well-being. Then it was indisputable: in no way did the experimenter consider the participant responsible for pushing the shock switches. And the less of the victim that could be seen, heard, or need be touched, the more likely a participant might be tempted by an offer that enabled them to prioritize the alleviation of their pain—flick more switches and evade the experimenter's hounding demands. On top of the participant processing schedule imposing intense levels of "control" over all involved, the schedule's inherent characteristic of "calculability" also meant Milgram was rather precisely able to "predict" when data collection would end.

As Milgram drove his organizational machine toward collecting a full set of data, any links in the Obedience studies' organizational chain who may have developed second thoughts about continuing to make their eventually harmful contributions likely found themselves trapped—both pushed and pulled—into fulfilling their personally beneficial specialist roles. It was easier for them, at the expense of others, to continue contributing and, if necessary, later deny, pass the buck of, or try to minimize, their personal responsibility for doing what they did. This organizational machine rather effectively subverted all helpers' basic humanity, their

personal agency, in favor of Milgram's preconceived and overarching policy objective of obedience maximization.

For me, the key, it would seem, to Milgram's "success" in achieving his preconceived goal of maximizing participant's "obedience" was that every functionary link across, and especially at the harm-infliction end of the chain, felt (personally) and/or appeared (to others present) sufficiently banal and innocent, when in reality they were neither. In fact, as the Truly Remote Pilot best illustrated, the more pedestrian and colorless every helpers' piecemeal contributions felt and/or appeared, the greater their collective violent capabilities, and thus the higher the completion rate. To optimally maximize participation across the malevolent organizational chain, every functionary helpers' contributions needed to be, as was the case during the Truly Remote Pilot, reduced to "mere" paper shuffling or button pressing—an Arendtian-like banality of evil.

So at the end of this formally rational journey, what Milgram discovered was how best to socially engineer his preconceived goal from mere concept to dark reality. The Obedience studies are therefore a frightening "demonstration of power itself..."[48]—"the inexorable subordination of the less powerful by the powerful." Edward E. Jones, it would seem, was right all along: the baseline condition was at best a "triumph of social engineering."[49] As a powerful person with all the social, prestige, and financial capital of a fully funded Yale professor, Milgram's preconceived desires were achieved by him imposing on his less powerful helpers "a calculated restructuring of the informational and social field." His malevolent organizational process proved more than capable of shunting, among most involved, all "moral factors...aside..."[50]

I therefore think that the theory of responsibility ambiguity helps better understand the rather baffling New Baseline result. Having said that, this theory is built on the shoulders of contributions by several other scholars. For example, I think Weberian formal rationality and George Ritzer's insightful elaborations on it—the so-called McDonaldization—helps better understand how Milgram socially engineered into reality his preconceived goal to "maximize obedience." But Weber's legacy here is not quite enough to capture the nuance of the inner workings of Milgram's organizational machine. Here Niklas Luhmann's organizational systems theory better accounts for the structural top-down *and* bottom-up interactions between Milgram and his helpers during the invention of the baseline procedure. Milgram, the social engineer from above, was certainly not the only innovative force involved in the generation of

his surprising results.[51] And Albert Bandura's theory of moral disengagement perhaps best accounts for the psychological inner workings of how each functionary helper—from Milgram, his funders, actors, through to the "obedient" participants themselves—resolved their personal dilemmas over whether or not to continue contributing to a potentially harmful study. So although the theory of responsibility ambiguity likely provides much insight into Milgram's baseline result, it is important to note that within this experiment, there are many interactive moving sociological (structures) and psychological (individual) parts, a fact that helps secure its theoretical complexity. Milgram once said of Asch's experiment that, in a statement Blass thought was just as applicable to the Obedience studies, it "rotates as a kind of permanent intellectual jewel. Focus analytic light on it, and it diffracts energy into new and interesting patterns."[52] Although that jewel is, when it comes to the Obedience studies, undoubtedly of the dark variety, I too see merit in Milgram's words.

Conclusion

This chapter determines that the most important source of responsibility ambiguity in the Obedience studies was the shock generator, an incomparably powerful strain resolving mechanism that injected immense potency into Milgram's web of obligation. Without the shock generator, the responsibility ambiguity Milgram's experimental procedure generated would essentially have collapsed, leaving participants feeling and appearing as responsible as they in fact were for their actions. Milgram's variations clearly illustrate that the more the shock generator inhibited the victim from affecting the participant's emotional universe, the easier it became for the experimenter to persuade, coerce, and tempt them into harming a "likable" person. And they willingly did do so for the most trivial reasons—most commonly to avoid an awkward confrontation, but occasionally in fear of having to return the $4.50 for not completing. Clearly, when Milgram attached the shock generator to the last link in the Obedience studies' organizational chain, it increased enormously the violent capabilities of ordinary people.

This conclusion makes it easier to generalize Milgram's laboratory findings to the outside world. The twentieth century was the most destructive century in history—262,000,000 killed in warfare.[53] However, this was not because humanity attained new heights of hatred and racism, but rather because of incremental improvements

in bureaucratic organization, industrialization, technology to finding the formally rational "one best way" to goal achievement: destroy thy enemy. All of these factors created the possibility of mass death through the invention, construction, and mass proliferation of increasingly more powerful yet perceptually benign methods of killing, typically attached at the end of compartmentalized and thoroughly banal military bureaucracies.[54] And these military functionaries frequently make their essential contributions for what, much like during the Obedience studies, can be, relative to the destruction wrought, the most trivial of reasons.

So can Milgram's start-to-finish journey to his "one best way" of ensuring most ordinary people inflicted harm and the theoretical assertions developed from it provide new foundations on which to build a strong Milgram-Holocaust linkage? Indeed, the main aim of Volume 2 of this book is to apply the observational and theoretical insights gained in the present volume on Milgram's Obedience studies to the Nazi's attempted extermination of the European Jews. Volume 2 (a free Open Access book) will pursue this journey in an attempt to better understand how ordinary and only moderately antisemitic Germans so quickly became willing executioners.

Notes

1. SMP, Box 46, Folder 163.
2. Milgram (1974, p. 157).
3. Milgram (1974, p. 14).
4. Burger (2014) and Zimbardo (2007, pp. 273–274).
5. Milgram (1974, pp. 39, 36).
6. Milgram (1974, p. 36).
7. Milgram (1965, p. 61).
8. Bauman (1989, p. 155).
9. SMP, Box 46, Folder 175.
10. Russell and Gregory (2005, p. 334).
11. See, for example, Gilbert (1981) and Sabini and Silver (1982).
12. If there is any credibility to this general argument that the shock generator was of central importance, how then do I explain the enormous amount of variability in completion rates across Milgram's many baseline variations? Quite simply, all of Milgram's variations included and thus relied on the presence of a shock generator. That is, he never ran the above mentioned hypothetical "No Shock Generator" control condition. Milgram's universal reliance on the shock generator throughout the research program, I would argue, injected potency into all of the

additional strain resolving mechanisms and binding factors he added to his baseline(s) and numerous variations. For example, and as mentioned, the shock generator enhanced the potency of the foot-in-the-door effect, but as Milgram's initial research idea to have participants "Tap" then "Slug" the learner suggested, the foot-in-the-door effect would have collapsed with impotence in the absence of the shock generator. No shock generator, no 65% completion rate.

13. SMP, Box 70, Folder 289.
14. SMP, Box 70, Folder 290.
15. See also Milgram (1974, pp. 7–9, 38), Bandura (1973, p. 177), and Markusen and Kopf (1995, pp. 85–86, 231–235).
16. Grossman (1995, p. 113).
17. Markusen and Kopf (1995, p. 231).
18. Grossman (1995, pp. 131–132).
19. Grossman (1995, p. 121).
20. One common criticism of Grossman's argument is that, as the historical record indicates, human beings have been killing each other with close-contact methods since time immemorial. This criticism was also raised in relation to the Obedience studies. One "Dr. Swartz" informed Milgram in a document dated 25 April 1966, "The question that occurred to me has to do with the proximity of the victim, the closeness—the person who was pressing the buttons found it harder and harder to do all this, the closer the victim came. Here again if we extrapolate this, there shouldn't have been any wars in human history when war consisted of hand-to-hand combat. […] Man has been slaughtering man since he was put on the face of the earth" (SMP, Box 71, Folder 303). One response to such an argument is that perceptually benign killing technology makes killing *relatively* easier than when using perceptually intense close-contact methods. Thus, perceptually benign methods increase most people's killing capabilities. Also, advancements in the destructive power of such perceptually remote military technology in the last few centuries have clearly increased humankind's destructive capabilities, as the incomparably lethal twentieth century illustrates (see Markusen and Kopf 1995 p. 242; Rummel 1992). Formally rational thought has led to the production of perceptually more remote and exponentially more powerful killing technology, which has increased humankind's ability to slaughter their fellow man with psychological ease.
21. Bourke (1999, p. 209).
22. As World War Two bomber pilot J. Douglas Harvey later reflected in relation to a mission that targeted Berlin, "I could not visualize the horrible deaths my bombs...had caused here. I had no feeling of guilt. I had no feeling of accomplishment" (quoted in Fussell 1989, p. 143).

23. Ardery (1978, p. 107, cited in Markusen and Kopf 1995, p. 235). As Katz (1989, p. 268) argues: "technology as such helps shape consciousness into a "semi-autonomous cognitive domain." It helps to redirect, to close off, the mind from larger, perennial considerations of the equation of ends and means, of objects and their use. This, in turn, produces a reconditioned mentality that is conventionally amoral…"
24. Bourke (1999, p. 210).
25. Quoted in Holmes (1985, p. 379). See Grossman (1995, p. 124) for an exception to this general rule. It is not being suggested that soldiers in the modern military cannot lethally deploy weapons like bayonets, because some certainly can (see Markusen and Kopf 1995, pp. 94–105). What is being argued is that soldiers are *less likely* to be capable of using such weapons relative to those that require they experience less perceptual stimulation (like, for example, drones).
26. Glover (1999, p. 99).
27. Caidin (1960, p. 14).
28. Quoted in Rees (2005, p. 293).
29. Fisher (1983, p. 408).
30. See Goldhagen (1996, pp. 301–302, 307, 351, 351, 358–359, 401).
31. See Goldhagen (1996, p. 217).
32. Bar-On (1989, p. 196), Berenbaum (1997, p. 146), Kühne (2010, p. 53), Lifton (1986, pp. 254–267), Rhodes (2002, p. 140), and Rossino (2003, pp. 157–158).
33. Goldhagen (1996, p. 307).
34. Levi (2013, p. 147).
35. Höss (2001, p. 135).
36. Kren and Rapport (1980, pp. 64, 70).
37. Quoted in Russell (2009, pp. 64–65).
38. Milgram (1965, p. 61).
39. Quoted in Russell and Gregory (2011, p. 508).
40. Russell (2017).
41. Russell (2017).
42. Milgram (1965, p. 61).
43. Miller (1986, p. 9).
44. SMP, Box 62, Folder 126.
45. Arendt (1970, p. 38).
46. Russell and Gregory (2015, p. 136).
47. Perry (2012, p. 1).
48. Stam et al. (1998, p. 173).
49. Quoted in Parker (2000, p. 112).
50. Milgram (1974, p. 7).

51. For more information on Luhmann, see Kühl (2013, 2016).
52. Milgram (1977, p. 196, as cited in Blass 2004, p. 282).
53. Rummel (1992). See also Hart (1957, cited in Markusen and Kopf 1995, p. 29).
54. Markusen and Kopf (1995) and Pick (1996).
55. Grossman (1995, p. 98).

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VOL. II

Nestar Russell

UNDERSTANDING WILLING PARTICIPANTS

Milgram's Obedience Experiments and the Holocaust

Understanding Willing Participants, Volume 2

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Milgram's Obedience Experiments
and the Holocaust

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For Mum and Dad.

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Introduction to Volume 2—The "Twisted Road" to Auschwitz

Answers are always anywhere anyone asks.
—Tony B. Anderson (Anderson 2007, p. 6)

What, in terms of a brief synopsis, were Volume 1's key arguments and conclusions? At the expense of repeating what I said at the end of Volume 1, this book set out by presenting a resilient conundrum in Holocaust studies. That is, considering that many specialist historians agree that during the Nazi era most Germans were only moderately anti-semitic,[1] how during the Holocaust did they so quickly prove capable of slaughtering millions of Jews? I argued that social psychologist Stanley Milgram's Obedience to Authority experiments may hold key insights into answering this perplexing question. Milgram's main discovery was that 65% of ordinary people in his laboratory willingly, if hesitantly, followed an experimenter's commands to inflict seemingly intense—perhaps even lethal—electrical shocks on a "likable" person.[2] When participants were asked why they completed this experiment, much like the Nazi war criminals, they typically said they were just following higher orders.[3] There is no shortage of scholars who, like Milgram, sensed similarities between the Obedience studies and the Holocaust.[4] These parallels have so frequently been drawn that Arthur G. Miller collectively

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Schleunes (1970). Small sections of Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 5 were previously published in the *Canadian Journal of Sociology* (see Russell 2017).

termed them the Milgram-Holocaust linkage.[5] An increasing number of scholars, however, have challenged the validity of these similarities by demonstrating how the Obedience studies differ to, or conflict with, the Holocaust's finer historical details. One of many possible examples is that unlike during the Holocaust, Milgram's participants were clearly concerned about the well-being of their "victim." Despite this trend, Miller notes one behavioral similarity that I believe merits further attention: "Milgram's results could be likened to the Holocaust itself. Both scenarios revealed ordinary people willing to treat other people with unimaginable cruelty…"[6] Extrapolating from this observation, I suggest that if it was possible to delineate Milgram's start-to-finish inventive journey in transforming most of his participants into compliant inflictors of harm *on a likeable person*, perhaps the insights gained might shed new light into how *only moderately antisemitic* Germans so quickly became willing executioners.

So how then was Milgram able to quickly transform most ordinary people into torturers of a likeable person? I argue he did so by deploying formally rational techniques of discovery and organization. To be clear, what exactly did I mean by the term formal rationality?

Formal Rationality

Max Weber conceives formal rationality as the search for the optimum means to a given end—the "one best way" to goal achievement. Weber's model of a formally rationalized strategy was bureaucracy, an organizational process designed to find the one best way to goal achievement. To construct the "one best" bureaucratic process, managers break an organizational goal into a variety of discrete tasks, the achievement of which they allocate to different specialist functionaries or bureaucrats. Using a predetermined sequence, each bureaucrat performs their specialist task by following certain rules and regulations, after which the next bureaucrat in the organizational chain performs their specialist task until the goal is achieved.

The specific rules and regulations each bureaucrat follows are determined by what "past history" has suggested to managers is probably the one best way to goal achievement.[7] That is, as bureaucrats perform particular tasks, over time a manager's intuitive feel, previous experiences, and observations of the process in action lead them to the incremental discovery of even better strategies, generating new and even more

efficient rules and regulations for their bureaucrats to follow. Weber's characteristics of bureaucracy (as an ideal type) include specialized labor, a well-defined hierarchy, clearly defined responsibilities, a system of rules and procedures, impersonality of relations, promotion based on qualifications, the centralization of authority, and written records.[8]

Building on Weber's legacy, George Ritzer argues that organizational strategies like bureaucracy have four main components: efficiency, predictability, control, and calculability (E.P.C.C.).[9] Efficiency is the pursuit of a shorter or faster route to goal achievement—the optimal means to a desired end. Predictability is the preference that all variables operate in a standardized and thus foreseeable way, thereby enabling managers to steer an organization toward future beneficial outcomes. Control is greater manipulative command over all factors and therefore the elimination of as many uncertainties as possible. Greater control enables greater predictability (especially as human labor is, over time, replaced by more controllable, predictable, and efficient non-human technologies). Finally, calculability involves the quantification of as many factors as possible. Advances in calculability enable greater measurement, which extends control over more variables and in turn improves the predictability of future outcomes. The greater the degree of formal rationality (advances in E.P.C.C), the greater the chance of discovering the "one best way" of arriving at organizational goal achievement, whatever it might be.

The one best way of producing motor cars over the past century or so provides an excellent example of advancing E.P.C.C. The production of the first-ever motor cars involved a few skilled engineers and tradespeople laboriously constructing and then attaching handcrafted parts to a stationary vehicle frame. This technique was not only slow (inefficient) but also unpredictable as the variable, non-standardized car parts ensured an equally variable end-product. Furthermore, because the engineers and tradespeople's skills were rare, they could resist management's coercive attempts to make them work faster by, for example, threatening to quit or go on strike (uncontrollable). Because control and predictability were low, management struggled to calculate daily, monthly, and annual production outputs. Thus, E.P.C.C. in relation to the one best way of manufacturing motor vehicles was low.

Henry Ford then invented the inherently bureaucratic motor car assembly-line production process. In Ford's factory, a line of vehicle frames moved along a conveyor belt. The frames moved past many specialist assembly workers, each of whom sequentially attached

a standardized car part. At the end of the moving line, a constant flow of assembled vehicles emerged. Ford's moving line caused production efficiency to greatly increase. The standardized car parts meant identical end products, and thus predictability also increased. The set speed of the moving line enabled Ford to quantify daily, monthly, and annual output, thus increasing calculability. But it was control perhaps that advanced the most. If one worker failed to keep up with the speed of the moving line, to the frustration of other workers and management alike, a bottleneck might form. Therefore, the set speed of the moving line in conjunction with a fear of falling behind pushed workers to perform their tasks faster than they probably would have on their own accord. The assembly line is therefore an early example of a more efficient non-human technology capable of imposing greater workforce control—all felt pushed by an unsympathetic machine into working quickly.[10] And if workers resisted the set speed of Ford's moving line (by quitting or going on strike), because they were unskilled, he could more easily replace them. Ford's "one best way" of producing motor vehicles increased all four compo-nents of a formally rational system. It transpires Ford developed this revolutionary system by relying on his intuitive feel of what might work best, his previous life experiences, and his real-time observations of the emerging production process. Thus, it was *past history* that supplied him with new and potentially more effective "one best ways" of ensuring goal achievement—improved rules and regulations for his workers to follow. Ford was repeatedly supplied with new ways of producing motor cars, and eventually, he settled on what he believed to be the one best way.

But rationalization did not stop there. Because workers' tasks were purposefully simple, advances in technology eventually rendered their labor susceptible to replacement. By the end of the twentieth cen-tury, the automation of the motor vehicle industry had taken Fordism to new heights, substituting (where possible) human labor with com-puter-guided, high-tech robots. These robots could be programmed (greater calculability) to perform the same tasks without variation (greater predictability), with no risk of labor disputes (greater control), and without a break at higher speeds (greater efficiency).

As the history of motor vehicle production illustrates, formally rational organizational processes have gained greater and greater control over employees. These organizational processes modified human behav-ior in Ford's factories to the point that workers' movements started to resemble machine-like actions. And the closer human actions resembled

those of machines, the easier it became to eventually replace them with actual machines—what Ritzer terms "the ultimate stage in control over people…"[11] Ritzer implies here that perhaps the greatest threat to a desired end is human labor—that is, people. Humans are notoriously unpredictable, because, unlike non-human technology, they have proven very difficult for goal-directed managers to control.[12]

So how, then, did Milgram deploy formally rational techniques of discovery and organization to convert (ostensibly) most of his ordinary participants into torturers of a likeable person? Documents obtained from Milgram's personal archive held at Yale University reveals this transformative journey.

The Invention of the Obedience Studies

Volume 1 illustrated that throughout and beyond his formative years, Milgram took an uneasy yet keen interest in the Holocaust. Around the time Milgram was completing his Ph.D. in social psychology, Nazi bureaucrat Adolf Eichmann was captured, put on trial, and executed. Like many Nazis before him, Eichmann justified his actions by arguing that he had only followed higher orders to send millions of Jews to the Nazi death camps. The Nazi perpetrators' favorite justification caused Milgram to wonder if most ordinary (albeit American) people in a social science experiment would also follow orders to inflict harm. For such an experiment to garner scholarly attention, Milgram knew it would have to obtain eye-catching results (nobody would be surprised by a low rate of obedience to hurt an innocent person). So Milgram's research was founded on a preconceived goal: to run an experiment that would "maximize obedience."[13] Because Milgram did not have an experimental procedure capable of generating such a result, in the role of project manager, he had to invent a means capable of achieving his preconceived end. At some level, he obviously sensed that inventing such a procedure might be possible.

His first attempt at developing a basic procedure was—as first attempts usually are—rudimentary. Drawing on his previous experience as an observer of Nazi war crimes trials and what he thought had caused the Holocaust—small steps toward a radical outcome, pledges of allegiance, group pressure, and strict obedience to harmful orders—he envisioned a procedure where participants pledged to obey orders to "Tap" and eventually "Slug" an innocent person. During this experiment, Milgram planned to insert a participant among a group of actors

who all happened to be in favor of inflicting harm on an innocent person. He also envisioned a control condition: A higher authority figure was to instruct a singular participant to inflict harm on an innocent person. By inserting into his experimental program what he then thought were the Nazis' most effective techniques of coercion, Milgram aimed to simulate the Holocaust in a laboratory setting. Despite his ambitions, however, he soon sensed his initial idea would fail to maximize obedience. With one eye on his end goal, Milgram developed a new idea drawing on his previous experience as a psychologist and an intuitive feel of what he thought was more likely to work. He sensed participants would be more likely to inflict harm using a shock machine than by engaging in direct physical violence. Effectively, he substituted human labor with a more predictable, controllable, calculable, and efficient source of non-human technology. Rather than relying on a pledge to obey, Milgram furthermore sensed participants would more likely inflict harm on an innocent person if doing so was morally inverted into a social good. More specifically, participants were told that the purpose of the experiment was to "scientifically" determine if their infliction of "punishment" on a learner would affect this person's ability to learn (Milgram's so-called persuasion phase). Although his emerging procedure aimed to ensure that most ordinary people inflicted harm, the basic idea also started to look a little less like the Holocaust captured in the laboratory setting. Nonetheless, to determine if the procedure was indeed capable of generating the results he desired, Milgram tasked his students at Yale with running the first series of Obedience study pilots.

By late November 1960, the class was ready to run variations on both the participant among a "group" condition and participant "alone" (control) condition. Throughout the student-run pilots, participants could see the "shocked" learner through a translucent screen. The "group" experiment confirmed Milgram's prediction that some people would follow along with the crowd. It was the results from the "alone" (control) condition, however, that caught Milgram by complete surprise: About 60% of the participants willingly administered the most intense shocks when an actor dressed as an experimenter instructed them to do so.

During this first series of pilots, Milgram also observed an unexpected behavior: Some participants refused to look at the learner through the translucent screen, yet they continued to inflict every shock asked of them. Similarly, in subsequent variations, other participants attempted to anticipate when exactly the learner was likely to react in pain to the "shocks,"

and then, they would try to neutralize these stressed verbal reactions by talking over the top of them.[14] Milgram termed all such behavior "avoidance," whereby "the subject screens himself from the sensory consequences of his actions."[15] In doing so, participants did "not permit the stimuli associated with the victim's suffering to impinge on them [...] In this way, the victim is psychologically eliminated as a source of discomfort."[16] Thus, for participants, avoidance seemed to make it psychologically easier for them to do as they were told and deliver more shocks. Avoidance behavior intrigued Milgram because it raised an interesting question: What would happen if, during future pilots, he substituted the translucent screen with the non-human technology of a solid wall? Would doing so make it even easier for participants to inflict every shock? Would introducing a partition perhaps increase the completion rate above the first pilot's 60% figure, thus edging Milgram ever closer to his preconceived goal "to create the strongest obedience situation"?[17] Milgram intended to find out.

What becomes apparent is that during the invention of the Obedience studies, Milgram's basic strategy to improve his emerging official baseline procedure was to retain those innovative ideas that helped "maximize obedience" and abandon those that didn't. For example, he replaced his idea that participants physically assault the victim with one where they use a shock generator. And he dropped the pledge to obey in favor of an experiment where the infliction of harm was morally inverted into a social good. Finally, although before running the first pilots Milgram intended for the single-participant variation to serve as the control experiment for what he thought would be the more coercive (and successful) group variation, after running the first pilots, the single-participant experiment's auspiciously high completion rate led him to make it the central concern of the entire experimental venture.

Milgram ended up terming his more effective manipulative techniques either strain resolving mechanisms or binding factors. Strain resolving mechanisms are techniques designed to reduce the tensions normally experienced by a person inflicting harm. Examples of strain resolving mechanisms include the emotionally distancing shock generator and the participants' comforting belief that their infliction of harm would (apparently) contribute to a greater (scientific) good. Binding factors are powerful bonds that can entrap a person into doing something they might otherwise prefer not to do. Examples of binding factors include the experimenter's $4.50 payment to participants (which likely promoted feelings of being contractually obligated to do as they were asked); the

experimenter's coercive prods that it was "absolutely essential" participants "continue"; and the shock machine's gradual escalation in shock intensity that drew many participants into "harming" an innocent person. It seems the more strain resolving mechanisms and binding factors Milgram added to his emerging procedure, the cumulatively stronger his so-called "web of obligation" became.[18]

On completing the first pilots, Milgram did "not believe that the students could fully appreciate the significance of what they were viewing…"[19] He knew, however, that the first pilots tested a variety of situational forces he suspected may have played some role in producing the Holocaust. In other words, what the students regarded as a fascinating spectacle, Milgram suspected, might provide insight into the perpetration of the Holocaust. It was probably then that Milgram sensed the enormous potential of his research idea.

More than half a year later, in late July and early August 1961, Milgram, in an attempt to iron out the kinks of his research idea,[20] completed a second and more professional series of pilot studies. In the final variation of these trials, Milgram ran the "Truly Remote Pilot study," wherein having introduced a solid wall into the basic procedure, participants could neither see nor hear the learner's reactions to being "shocked." Milgram's hypothesis about the effect of a wall proved correct, because in this pilot "virtually all" participants inflicted every shock.[21] The leap from a 60% completion rate in the student-run pilots to something approaching 100% in the Truly Remote Pilot saw Milgram achieve his preconceived goal of maximizing obedience.

So, as shown, *before* running both pilot series, Milgram relied exclusively on his past experiences and intuitive feel of what strain resolving mechanisms and binding factors he imagined might aid his quest to maximize the emerging basic procedure's completion rate. But *during* the pilots Milgram clearly relied on his skills of observation. For example, Milgram's suspicion (correct, as it turned out) that substituting the translucent screen with a wall might increase the emerging procedure's completion rate beyond 60% was stimulated by the participants in the first pilot series who turned away from their victim but inflicted every shock. Thus, Milgram's real-time observations of the pilots led him to a very powerful strain resolving idea—one that was clearly beyond his undeniably impressive powers of imagination.

After completing the second pilot series, the Truly Remote Pilot study's maximized completion rate signaled to Milgram that he had

likely developed a basic procedure that, should he use it as his first official baseline, nearly all participants would complete. That is, his latest procedure was very likely to generate the high rate of obedience he had all along desired. Using Ritzer's terminology, over time Milgram had gained so much "control" over his participants' likely behavior that should he make his next trial the official baseline, he was able to roughly "predict" that it would obtain a high ("calculable") completion rate. Thus, he had found the most "efficient" means of arriving at his preconceived end.[22] A new one best means to his end had emerged. And it was *past history*—Milgram's intuitive feel, past experiences, and real-time observations of the pilot studies—that had, through a process of trial and error, gradually led him to the Truly Remote Pilot study's new and more effective "rules and regulations." If Milgram wanted to achieve his preconceived goal in the first official trial, all his helpers—his research assistants (Alan Elms and Taketo Murata), actors (John Williams and James McDonough), *and* participants—just needed to follow the latest and most effective "rules and regulations."[23]

However, running an official baseline experiment that nearly every participant completed raised an unanticipated problem: Such a result would deprive Milgram of any way of identifying individual differences between them.[24] Consequently, Milgram deemed it necessary to introduce a strain *inducing* force to the official baseline procedure—an alteration that he anticipated would slightly increase the proportion of disobedient participants. With the intention of reducing (slightly) the basic procedure's probable completion rate by increasing participant stress, Milgram decided that the first official baseline experiment would include some auditory perceptual feedback. That is, after the participant inflicted the 300- and 315-volt shocks, Milgram instructed the learner McDonough to kick the wall and then fall silent. In contrast to Milgram's repeated approach across the pilots to reduce participant tension (and increase their probability of inflicting every shock), the intention behind this procedural addition was obviously to increase slightly their stress levels. Having increased participants' stress levels, he presumed a small proportion would refuse to complete the experiment. Clearly, Milgram had gained so much "control" over his participants' likely reaction to being in the experiment that he was able to guess ("predictability") that this latest procedural alteration would likely send his otherwise rising completion rate into a sudden (albeit sight) reverse.

Indeed, on 7 August 1961, Milgram ran his first official baseline experiment, producing a 65% completion rate. Milgram was probably expecting a slightly higher completion rate considering he made only subtle changes (infrequent wall-banging) to the Truly Remote Pilot. Nevertheless, the still surprisingly high completion rate, which garnered much media attention, became his "best-known result" and thus had its intended effect.[25] This was the rationally driven and somewhat circuitous learning process that guided Milgram during the invention of his "one best way" to preconceived goal achievement.

In an attempt to develop a theory capable of explaining this baseline result, Milgram then undertook twenty-two slight variations, the fifth of which he made his "New Baseline." Unlike its predecessor, in the New Baseline, the learner's intensifying verbal reactions to being "shocked" could be heard by the participant up until the 330-volt switch (thereafter becoming silent). The more disturbing (eye-catching) New Baseline (or cardiac condition) also obtained a surprisingly high 65% completion rate and went on to serve as the basic model for all subsequent variations. One of the most interesting of these many variations was, in my view, the Peer Administers Shock condition where the experimenter only required the participant to perform the subsidiary (although necessary) task of posing the word pair questions, while another participant (actually an actor) administered shocks for any incorrect answers. In comparison with the New Baseline, this variation ended in a much higher completion rate— 92.5% continued to perform their subsidiary role until the three consecutive 450-volt "shocks" had been inflicted. Participants who completed this variation revealed in post-experimental interviews that they did not believe their involvement made them in any way responsible for the learner being shocked—they asserted that only the shock-inflicting peer was at fault (although, of course, if the participant refused to ask any questions, the peer would have been deprived of their rationale for "shocking" the learner). Interestingly, as the results of the other official variations demonstrated, even when participants had to shock the learner themselves, those who completed the protocol were more inclined than those who refused to shift the blame to either the experimenter or learner.[26]

Another particularly interesting variation was the Relationship condition where the participant was earlier told to bring to the laboratory someone who was at least an acquaintance. One of this pair became the teacher, the other the learner. Once the learner was strapped into the shock chair and the teacher and experimenter left the learner's room, Milgram appeared

and informed the learner that the experiment was actually trying to determine if their friend would obey commands to shock them. Then, Milgram trained the learner how to react to the "intensifying shocks" (so that their reactions were similar to those of the usual New Baseline learner). This incomparably unethical condition obtained a 15% completion rate.

Milgram also ran a New Baseline variation where all the participants were women and it too obtained a 65% completion rate. With both male and female participants, something selfish seemed to lie behind the individual decision to fulfill their specialist role in the experiment, as the pseudonymous participant Elinor Rosenblum perhaps best illustrated. That is, after completing the experiment, Rosenblum met her actually unharmed learner and explained to him: "You're an actor, boy. You're marvelous! Oh, my God, what he [the experimenter] did to me. I'm exhausted. I didn't want to go on with it. You don't know what I went through here."[27] Upon it being revealed that the experiment was a ruse, she interpreted this new reality to mean that she was in fact the only victim of the experiment. And since she was now the victim, Rosenblum felt the learner should be informed about her painful experience—one which it should not be forgotten ended in her deciding at some point to perhaps electrocute an innocent person.

Milgram anticipated (incorrectly as Volume 1 shows) that his many variations would eventually isolate what caused most participants to complete the New Baseline condition, and thus lead him to a comprehensive theory of obedience to authority. What Milgram overlooked, however, was not only the omnipotent strain resolving power of his shock generator, but also the formally rational and inherently bureaucratic organizational machine that unobtrusively lay behind it.

Milgram's Reliance on Formally Rational Techniques of Organization

In conjunction with the above learning process, Volume 1 also revealed how Milgram, again in the role of project manager, recruited his many specialist helpers. To achieve his preconceived goal and collect a full set of data, he required institutional and financial sponsors, along with the aid of several research assistants, actors, and technicians. All, it will be noted, agreed to become complicit in the unethical infliction of potentially dangerous levels of stress on innocent people. Milgram obtained their consent much as the experimenter did with the participants: He

convinced them that despite any ethical reservations they might hold, in order to "conquer the disease" of "destructive obedience…"[28] it was necessary they fulfill their specialist roles. That is, by contributing to the infliction of harm, they would help bring about a greater good. On top of morally inverting harm into a social good, Milgram further tempted all his helpers into performing their specialist roles by appealing to their sometimes different self-interested needs or desires: the provision of financial reimbursement, the prospect of organizational prestige, the offer of article co-authorship, and other material benefits. Eventually, a cognitive thread of personal benefit connected every link in the emerging Obedience studies' organizational chain. Thus, as Milgram anticipated and then applied the most effective motivational formula for each of his helpers, the non-human technology of bureaucracy started to take shape. In turn, the division of labor inherent in this organizational system inadvertently ensured that every functionary helper could, if they so chose, plead ignorance to, displace elsewhere ("pass the buck"), or diffuse (dilute) responsibility for their contributions to a harmful outcome. As Milgram and his helpers made their fractional contributions to organizational goal achievement, a physical disjuncture arose between individual roles and any negative effects. And this disjuncture could stimulate responsibility ambiguity among functionaries. Responsibility ambiguity is, as outlined in Volume 1, a general state of confusion within and beyond the bureaucratic process over who is totally, mostly, partially, or not at all responsible for a injurious outcome.[29] When the issue of personal responsibility becomes debatable, some functionaries may genuinely believe they are not responsible for the harmful end result. Responsibility ambiguity, however, can also encourage other functionaries to sense opportunity amid the confusion: They realize they can continue contributing to and personally benefiting from harm infliction safe in the knowledge they can probably do so with impunity. In this case, the responsibility ambiguity across the bureaucratic process likely provided potent strain resolving conditions that made it possible, even attractive, for every link in the Obedience studies' organizational chain to plead ignorance to, displace, or diffuse responsibility for their harmful contributions. Because Milgram and his helpers either genuinely didn't feel responsible for their eventually harmful contributions or (more likely) realized that even if they did they at least probably didn't appear so, individual levels of strain subsided, clearing the ethical way to remain involved in the personally beneficial study.

At the end of the organizational chain, however, where voluntary participants were burdened with the specialist task of (ostensibly) inflicting harm on the learner, Milgram's first idea that they engage in a direct physical assault ensured for an undeniable connection between cause and effect. For the participants in such an experiment, the compartmentalization inherent in the division of labor could not protect them from knowing—in both concept and perceptual reality—about their harmful actions. For participants who might inflict this assault, responsibility clarity, not ambiguity, awaited them. Achievement of Milgram's preconceived goal therefore necessitated the inclusion of something sufficiently capable of separating cause from effect. The solution came when Milgram, as he frequently did, from the *top-down* of his (loosely) hierarchical organizational process (*first link Milgram instructed second link experimenter to pressure the final link participant into harming the learner*) introduced the emotionally distancing and inherently strain resolving "shock" machine (along with his subsequent idea to separate participants from the learner with a translucent screen, or even better, a solid wall). It is important to note that the idea to introduce a wall was, as just mentioned, actually initiated by *bottom-up* forces within the Obedience study's wider organizational process: Some participants during the student-run pilots looked away from the person they were "harming." Interestingly, on their own accord, these participants were effectively inventing and then applying their own strain resolving means of better ensuring they could do as they were told. Participants, however, were not the only low-ranking innovators: As Volume 1 shows, the experimenter quickly sensed what his boss Milgram likely desired and, in the hope of maximizing the completion rate, he (Williams) started inventing his own highly coercive binding prods.

Nonetheless, once Milgram introduced the combination of the strain resolving, non-human technologies of the shock machine *and* wall into the Truly Remote Pilot, the participant became physically and emotionally disconnected from their victim, and suddenly, a strong dose of responsibility ambiguity became available to participants (a suddenly more ambiguous situation that would not have been possible in the absence of these non-human technologies). In fact, as I argued in Volume 1, no other combination of variables could stimulate responsibility ambiguity like the shock generator when combined with the wall—they were the most powerful strain resolving elements in the entire experimental paradigm.[30] And when participants, as they did during the

Truly Remote Pilot, could no longer hear, see, or feel the implications of their actions, their specialist contributions to the wider process now more closely resembled the unemotional, technocratic, seemingly innocent, and somewhat banal contributions of all the other functionary helpers further up the organizational chain. The combination of these two strain resolving mechanisms effectively injected the indifference into Chester Barnard's *Zone of Indifference*, which is where a functionary's higher "orders for actions" are sufficiently inoffensive to the point that they become "unquestionably acceptable."[31] With responsibility ambiguity thereby available to every link in the chain—where all functionary helpers felt or appeared to be *mere* middle-men—it suddenly became much easier to persuade, tempt, and, if necessary, coerce "virtually" everybody involved into performing their specialist harm-contributing roles.

And as responsibility ambiguity structurally *pulled* every functionary into performing their specialist roles, simultaneously the coercive force of bureaucratic momentum—where to avoid criticism for not doing one's job and/or to receive whatever personal benefits happened to be associated with goal achievement—structurally *pushed* all into following their "rules and regulations." An excellent example of bureaucratic momentum was initiated when, to sign up to partake in one of the Obedience research program's many variations, prospective participants had to select from Milgram's preconceived research schedule, one of the 780[32] available 60-minute slots. And when they arrived at the laboratory to fill their particular slot, participants were then—much like a car frame in Ford's factory—moved briskly along Milgram's data extraction assembly-line process. That is, within the tight one-hour timeframe, various members of Milgram's team sequentially engaged in specialist tasks that, among others, included training participants, running the experiment, collecting data, and undertaking debriefings. And much like on Ford's assembly line, because time was limited—another unsuspecting person was due at the top of the hour—all helpers felt the push of the non-human technology of Milgram's participant-processing schedule to quickly fulfill their specialist roles. Participants, located at the last link in this organizational assembly line, were also pushed into performing their specialist task by the force of bureaucratic momentum, more specifically in the form of the experimenter's seemingly unrelenting prods—"Please continue" and "It is absolutely essential that you continue." On top of the participant-processing schedule imposing greater "control" over all involved,

the schedule's inherent characteristic of "calculability" also meant, somewhat like with Ford, the young psychologist was able to "predict" when data collection would likely end (correctly as it turned out, at the end of the 1962 spring term).[33]

As Milgram drove his organizational machine toward collecting a full set of data, any links in the organizational chain who may have experienced second thoughts about continuing to make their eventually harmful contributions likely found themselves trapped—both pushed and pulled—into fulfilling their specialist roles. This organizational machine rather effectively attempted to subvert all helpers' basic humanity, their personal agency, in favor of Milgram's preconceived and overarching policy objective: maximization of "obedience." Thus, Milgram's inadvertent construction of and reliance on an inherently problem-solving and formally rational bureaucratic organization was, I believe, an essential structural contributor to his high baseline completion rate. More generally speaking, in my view, some admixture of Weberian formal rationality, Ritzer's McDonaldization, Luhmann's sociological systems theory,[34] Russell and Gregory's responsibility ambiguity, and Bandura's moral disengagement are all likely to lead one to a stronger comprehension of the undeniably complex Obedience studies (see Volume 1).

The key, it would seem, to Milgram's "success" in achieving his preconceived goal of maximizing obedience was that every functionary link' contribution across and especially at the harm-infliction end of the chain felt (personally) or appeared (to others present) sufficiently banal and innocent, when in reality they were neither. In fact, as the Truly Remote Pilot best illustrated, the more pedestrian and colorless every helper' piecemeal contributions felt or appeared, the greater all his helpers' (and his own) violent capabilities became, and thus the higher the completion rate. To optimally maximize participation across the organizational chain, every functionary helper' contributions needed to be, as was the case during the Truly Remote Pilot, reduced to the "mere" shuffling of paper or pressing of switches—an Arendtian-like banality of evil.

So at the end of this formally rational journey, what Milgram seems to have discovered was how best to socially engineer his preconceived goal from that of mere concept to disturbing reality. The Obedience studies are therefore a frightening "demonstration of power itself…"[35]—"the inexorable subordination of the less powerful by the powerful." Edward E. Jones, it would seem, was right all along: The baseline condition was at best a "triumph of social engineering."[36] As a powerful person with all

the social, prestige, and financial capital of a fully funded Yale professor, Milgram's preconceived desires were achieved by him imposing on the less powerful "a calculated restructuring of the informational and social field." His organizational process proved more than capable of shunting, among most of those involved, all "moral factors…aside…"[37]

Moving to a New Milgram-Holocaust Linkage

In my quest to develop a new and stronger Milgram-Holocaust linkage, the remainder of Volume 2 argues that certain Nazi project managers deployed similar Milgram-like formally rational *techniques of discovery and organization to reach their same preconceived goal of converting most ordinary people into willing inflictors of harm*. As I will show, the project managers that came closest to overarching goal achievement were those that most rationally utilized bureaucratic organizational techniques and, after running numerous pilot studies, went on to discover and then attach to the last link in their organizational chains, the most remote non-human harm-inflicting technologies. And the physically and emotionally more remote these harm-inflicting technologies— the less touching, seeing, and hearing experienced by those at the last of the perpetrator links in the wider organizational chain—the easier it became for the Nazi leadership to persuade, tempt, or, if needed, coerce their subordinates into exterminating other human beings. My justification for undertaking this journey is, as Alex Alvarez notes about the Holocaust, although "We know the history…our understanding of the means by which participants overcame normative obstacles to genocide is lacking."[38]

As the reader will discover, Volume 2 centers mostly on the evolution of the omnipotent strain resolving means of inflicting harm. In my view, when one pays close attention to the Nazi's various and eventually preferred means of inflicting harm, the insights gained are, much like with Milgram's own research, revelatory. This destructive and depressing journey of discovery demonstrates what I believe to be the most important Milgram-Holocaust linkage of all: formal rationality. I thus conclude that the means of inflicting harm at the last link of the Nazi's inherently problem-solving malevolent bureaucratic process played a central role in quickly transforming many only moderately antisemitic Germans into willing inflictors of harm.

In terms of what follows, Chapter 2 explains how the Nazi party rose to power and how their destructive ideology spread among the German masses. This chapter delineates the Nazi regime's "calculated restructuring of the informational and social field"—their promulgation of an "institutional justification" among ordinary and, for the most part, only moderately antisemitic Germans that eventually led to the widespread infliction of harm on Jews and others. Both just before and soon after the start of World War Two, Chapter 3 details the Nazi regime's first forays into the killing of civilian populations. Then, during the Soviet invasion, Chapter 4 presents what, in my view, were the SS leadership's most salient *top-down* strain resolving and binding forces used to encourage their ordinary and only moderately antisemitic underlings to participate in the so-called Holocaust by bullets.[39] Also in relation to the killing fields of the Soviet Union, Chapter 5 details what I suspect were the ordinary German's most important *bottom-up* strain resolving and binding forces. With a particular focus on Operation Reinhard, Chapter 6 explores the rise of what evolved into the large-scale industrial gassing programs in the East. Chapter 7, then, delves into the Nazi regime's final solution to the Jewish Question: the rise and domination of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Chapter 8 clarifies what the Nazis meant by what I show was, before and during World War Two, their ongoing pursuit for a "humane" means of exterminating the Jews and other so-called sub-humans. The concluding chapter provides a brief summary of my thesis along with some thoughts on its potentially wider applicability beyond the Holocaust.

In the following chapters, I regularly make behavioral comparisons between those involved in the Obedience studies and those who perpetrated the Holocaust. This seems incredibly unfair considering the former was a fake experiment and the latter involved the murder of millions of innocent people. It is important to note that although I think these analogies demonstrate a similarity in kind, I also believe they differ *enormously* in terms of degree.[40] Some readers may deem these comparisons completely odious, and if so, they will be on firm ground: The industrialized aims of the Holocaust remain unprecedented in human history. However, this does not mean that analogies cannot be drawn between Milgram's project and the Nazis' "Final Solution." As the Welsh writer Dannie Abse put it when reflecting on the Obedience studies, "in order to demonstrate that subjects may behave like so many Eichmanns the experimenter had to act the part, to some extent, of a Himmler."[41]

Notes

1. See, for example, Bankier (1992, pp. 72, 84), Bauer (2001, p. 31), Browning (1998, p. 200), Heim (2000, p. 320), Johnson and Reuband (2005, p. 284), Kershaw (1983, p. 277, 2008, p. 173), Kulka (2000, p. 277), Merkl (1975), and Mommsen (1986, pp. 98, 116).
2. Milgram (1974, p. 16).
3. Milgram (1974, p. 175).
4. See Bauman (1989), Blass (1993, 1998), Browning (1992, 1998), Hilberg (1980), Kelman and Hamilton (1989), Langerbein (2004), Miller (1986), Russell and Gregory (2005), and Sabini and Silver (1982).
5. Miller (2004, p. 194).
6. Miller (2004, p. 196).
7. Ritzer (2015, p. 30).
8. Gerth and Mills (1974, pp. 196–204) and Russell (2017).
9. Ritzer (1996).
10. Ritzer (2015, p. 37).
11. Ritzer (2015, p. 120).
12. Ritzer (2015, p. 128) and Russell (2017).
13. Quoted in Russell (2009, pp. 64–65).
14. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2301.
15. Milgram (1974, p. 158).
16. Milgram (1974, p. 58).
17. SMP, Box 46, Folder 165.
18. Quoted in Russell and Gregory (2011, p. 508).
19. Quoted in Blass (2004, p. 68).
20. Blass (2004, p. 75).
21. Milgram (1965, p. 61).
22. Russell (2017).
23. Russell (2017).
24. Milgram (1965, p. 61).
25. Miller (1986, p. 9).
26. Milgram (1974, p. 203).
27. Milgram (1974, pp. 82–83).
28. SMP, Box 62, Folder 126.
29. Russell and Gregory (2015, p. 136).
30. So although the efficacious effect of strain resolving mechanisms and binding factors appears to have been cumulative (the more the Milgram added, the higher the completion rate), it is important to note that some of these individual forces were far more powerful than others. And although it was not a sufficient cause of the baseline result, as illustrated in Volume 1, none was singularly more powerful than the shock generator when used in conjunction with a wall.

31. Barnard (1958, pp. 168–169).
32. Perry (2012, p. 1).
33. SMP, Box 43, Folder 127.
34. See Kühl (2013, 2016).
35. Stam et al. (1998, p. 173).
36. Quoted in Parker (2000, p. 112).
37. Milgram (1974, p. 7).
38. Alvarez (1997, p. 149).
39. Desbois (2008).
40. Any reader unsettled by my comparisons should keep in mind that, as Volume 1 shows, although Milgram's experiments were a ruse, for participants there was a real-time possibility that the shocks were real (the experimenter could have been, as some participants noted, a rogue mad scientist pursuing an actually harmful experiment). And had the experiments been real, the learner could have been critically injured. Also, although early on at least one participant later informed Milgram that his experiments placed the lives of participants with heart problems in great danger (implying thereafter medical screening should be introduced), Milgram chose to ignore this warning. It should be remembered that this negligence really could have cost somebody their life.
41. Abse (1973, p. 29).

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The Nazi Regime—Ideology, Ascendancy, and Consensus

This chapter delineates the Nazi regime's construction and promulgation of an ideology that saw many ordinary and mildly antisemitic Germans condone or feel indifferent about the infliction of harm on Jews and other "sub-humans." Much like the Obedience study's persuasion phase (see Volume 1), I argue that, mostly at the hands of the Nazi regime, Germany's "informational and social field" underwent a "calculated restructuring,"[1] the consequence of which saw the harming of others morally inverted into a social good.

THE ORIGINS OF NAZI IDEOLOGY AND THEIR RISE TO POWER

In the sixteenth century, the German Protestant reformer Martin Luther reflected on how Christians in Europe should deal with the small Jewish communities living in their midst. After vilifying the "rejected race of Jews" as liars and blasphemes, he recommended a "merciful severity": burn down their synagogues, destroy their homes, appropriate their valuables, and stamp out their proselytizing—so "we may all be free of this insufferable devilish burden – the Jews."[2] To this point, terrifying violence of the sort Luther recommended had not been a major threat to the survival of European Jews. Attacks on Jews (pogroms) were more typically fueled by emotion and were, by nature, too disorganized to systematically wipe out entire and multiple Jewish communities.

Indeed, from the seventeenth century onward, the Enlightenment—the spread of humanist rationalism and secularism across Western

Europe—coincided with a sharp decline in pogrom violence.[3] Beginning in the late eighteenth century, and especially throughout the nineteenth century, the most progressive European nations including Germany, Holland, Denmark, France, and Great Britain all granted their Jewish communities equal rights. Many Jewish communities thrived socially, culturally, and economically. But many Christians also continued to harbor animosity toward their Jewish neighbors. The German composer Richard Wagner said in 1881:

> I hold the Jewish race to be the born enemy of pure humanity and everything noble in it. It is certain that it is running us Germans into the ground, and I am perhaps the last German who knows how to hold himself upright in the face of Judaism, which already rules everything.[4]

In 1899, Englishman Stewart Chamberlain expressed similar views in his best seller *The Foundations of the 19th Century*, which had run into its tenth edition by the early twentieth century.[5]

A few decades earlier in 1859, Charles Darwin published his seminal work *On the Origin of Species*. Darwin's book had a profound effect on his cousin Francis Galton, who applied the basic tenets of Darwin's new theory to human beings. Galton's efforts led to a new field of academic inquiry—eugenics, defined by the twentieth-century Harvard biologist Charles B. Davenport as, "the science of the improvement of the human race by better breeding."[6] Eugenics, as a field of study, split into two main schools: positive and negative. Positive eugenics calls for adding so-called desirable human characteristics to what then becomes a stronger gene pool. For example, a government might allow certain immigrants to enter their country because they believe them to have certain desirable genetic characteristics. Negative eugenics, however, aims to remove "undesirable" genetic characteristics from the gene pool, for example by sterilizing citizens with apparent genetic predispositions toward, say, alcoholism or drug addiction. Influential supporters of negative eugenics included prominent German scholars like Ernst Haeckel who in the early twentieth century argued in favor of the ancient Spartan strategy of eliminating any weak or sickly babies from their communities in order to strengthen the wider gene pool.[7] Around the same time, Karl Pearson, an early twentieth-century English mathematician, argued that nations should be "kept up to a high pitch of external efficiency by contest, chiefly by way of war with inferior races, and with equal races

by the struggle for trade routes and the sources of raw materials and food supply."[8] It was easy for those from the upper class like Pearson to espouse such destructive beliefs because when nations went to war—as they did during World War One (1914–1918)—their lives were rarely put in harm's way. It was the proverbial working-class "cannon fodder," structurally excluded from the distant safety of the officer ranks, who almost exclusively paid the price for the decisions by elites to go to war and expend, as it turned out, millions of genetically healthy lives in the trenches. This class bias extended to Germany's home front. For example, during the British Naval blockade (1915–1919), more than 400,000 mostly working-class German civilians starved to death.[9] Such class iniquities before and leading up to Germany's eventual World War One defeat ensured the Reich's brief experiment with democratic governance—the ill-fated Weimar Republic (1919–1932)—was marred by political instability frequently fueled by lower-class demands for a fairer and more egalitarian German society.[10]

Soon after the Weimar Republic came to power, in 1920 the publication of Binding and Hoche's *The Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life* saw the popularity of negative eugenics grow.[11] This book claimed that during World War One, as the strongest Germans were dying in droves on the frontlines, the lives of the apparently weakest genetic stock (those ineligible for military service) were safely preserved back in Germany. This preservation of the inferior over the superior was, they argued, weakening Germany's wider gene pool. A year later, Baur, Fischer, and Lenz published what became the leading German text on negative eugenics, *Outline of Human Genetics and Racial Hygiene*.[12] Those convinced by this increasingly popular literature started appealing to the country's political elite. For example, in 1923 the director of a Saxony health institute tried (unsuccessfully) to convince a minister in the Weimar government that, "what we radical hygienists promote is not at all new or unheard of. In a cultured nation of the first order, in the United States of America, that which we strive toward was introduced and tested long ago."[13] Indeed, Germany trailed behind the USA, the world's leader in negative eugenics, which, first in Indiana in 1907, and then in half of all the states by the 1930s,[14] became "*the first country to pass laws calling for compulsory sterilization in the name of racial purification*" [italics original].[15] Having said this, the sterilization of Americans was, relative to the country's population, a seldom applied policy.[16] Elsewhere, Switzerland and several Scandinavian countries introduced

laws in the 1920s aimed at the sterilization of certain institutionalized peoples.[17] Although across the early twentieth century the German medical profession tended to favor the far less radical field of positive eugenics, the tide was starting to change. For example, in 1932, just before the Nazi Party took power, the Weimar government drafted a voluntary sterilization law aimed at those with disabilities.[18] The law introduced on 1 January 1934 prompted Joseph S. DeJarnette, the superintendent of a hospital in Virginia, to claim in frustration, "The Germans are beating us at our own game."[19]

For the wider German public, awareness of negative eugenics came through sources more mainstream than medical treatises, including Adolf Hitler's 1925 autobiography, *Mein Kampf* (My Battle or My Struggle).[20] Hitler, a decorated World War One veteran and disgruntled leader of the right-wing Nazi Party, wrote this book while serving a prison sentence for a failed attempt in 1923 to overthrow the Weimar government. As early as 1920, the Nazi Party capitalized on the widespread postwar class tensions by advocating for "the uniting of all Germans within the one greater Germany…" They added, however, one caveat: Only "persons of German blood" could be nationals.[21] Hitler was basically advocating in favor of a race-based welfare state where greater class equality would be offered to all genetically healthy true-blooded Germans.[22] All outsiders, however, were to be excluded from receiving any Nazi welfare—particularly Germany's Jews, a group Hitler frequently dehumanized using terms like "bacilli," "spongers," "parasites," "poisonous mushrooms," and "rats…"[23] As Götz Aly notes, here "Nazi ideology conceived of racial conflict as an antidote to class conflict"—a predictably popular political strategy because it propagated "two age-old dreams of the German people: national and class unity."[24]

Then again, not everybody across early twentieth-century Germany felt as Hitler and the Nazi Party did toward the Jews. For example, Jewish political candidates during Germany's 1912 election won one-seventh of the seats in the Reichstag. This was an impressive feat since Germany's Jews made up only 1% of the national population. Success at the polls saw some in conservative political parties bitterly dub this election the "Jewish elections."[25] Putting the pockets of dissent aside, this electoral success clearly indicates that many non-Jewish Germans must have felt quite positively toward their Jewish political representatives.

Although some believe the origins of Hitler's intense antisemitism can be traced back to his more formative years,[26] others suspect it was

largely stimulated by his post-1919 belief that Germany's Jews were to blame for the Reich's loss of World War One, along with the great loss of German lives and land this defeat entailed.[27] Hitler believed Germany had not been defeated militarily (which in fact it had),[28] but instead lost the war and, as part of the Treaty of Versailles, almost one-eighth of its territory because Jewish leaders had treasonously stabbed their own nation in the back by submitting to the Allies. Germany's Jews did so, according to Hitler, with the sole intention of advancing their own social and economic position, pursuits that only highlighted their moral inferiority. Much like Wagner, Hitler also believed there existed a cunning group of international Jewish financiers whose machinations involved aspirations of worldwide economic domination. His developing ideology amalgamated ideas from Baur, Fischer, and Lenz on negative eugenics with his own on German nationalism.[29] This theoretical synthesis cemented the structural foundations of what would become Nazism, which according to Müller-Hill:

> claimed that there is a biological basis for the diversity of Mankind. What makes a Jew a Jew, a Gypsy a Gypsy, an asocial individual asocial, and the mentally abnormal mentally abnormal is in their blood, that is to say in their genes. All…are inferior. There can be no question of equal rights for inferior and superior individuals, so, as it is possible that inferior individuals breed more quickly than the superior, the inferior must be isolated, sterilized, rejected, and removed, a euphemism for killed. If we do not do this, we make ourselves responsible for the ruin of our culture.[30]

Clearly, Nazi ideology was not singularly concerned with Jews—something would also have to be done about other threatening and "inferior" groups. Having said that, there is no doubt Hitler had an incomparable and singular hatred of Jews, a group he believed posed a great moral and genetic threat to the Western world. In fact, not long after the formation of the Nazi Party, Hitler threatened:

> As soon as I have power [he said in 1922] I shall have gallows erected, for example in Munich in the Marienplatz. Jews will be hanged one after another and they will stay hanging until they stink … then the next group will follow … until the last Jew in Munich is exterminated. Exactly the same procedure will be followed in other cities until Germany is cleansed of the last Jew.[31]

Whether rich or poor, powerful or powerless, inferior or cunning, capitalist or communist, German or otherwise, if they were Jews then they were to blame. As Browning put it, for Hitler "the 'Jewish question' was the key to all other problems and hence the ultimate problem."[32] Much of the disdain traced back to plan old jealousy. That is, because within Jewish culture there has long been a deeply rooted dedication to studious habits and the pursuit of higher learning, in a modern meritocracy like Germany where opportunity (relatively speaking) abound, German Jews punched well above their weight. In terms of conventional measures of success, across the first third of the twentieth century, German Jews were disproportionately represented in the legal and medical professions. But perhaps most impressively, although German Jews only made up 1% of the population, between 1905 and 1937 nearly 37% of all German Nobel Laureates had Jewish ancestry.[33] Particularly among the many disaffected non-Jewish Germans who, like Hitler, failed to measure up, the scapegoat of blaming a visibly successful minority for all their own personal failures proved all too tempting. Importantly, Hitler's views conflicted with Christianity's traditional solution to the apparent threat of Judaism: religious conversion and assimilation. As far as Hitler was concerned, converting Jews into Christians would not eliminate the risk they posed to the "superior" Germanic bloodline. Assimilation, for Hitler, was tantamount to collective Germanic suicide.

On the other side of Nazi ideology's application of negative eugenics lay *Lebensraum*, the imperial quest to obtain more land or "living space…"[34] This notion drew on the tenets of positive eugenics. According to Hitler, if the "Germanic race" were indeed to thrive, then the ten million or so "high grade"[35] ethnic Germans living abroad in Eastern Europe needed to be repatriated. Together, Germany and Germans from near and far would become stronger. To accommodate this influx, however, Germany (apparently) required more land. It was this need for more living space that the Nazi regime used to bolster the necessity of going to war.[36] As far as Hitler was concerned, this land would best come from beyond the Reich's eastern national border—Poland and the Soviet interior. Annexing other nations' sovereign lands and unavoidably decimating large numbers of the native populations of those countries hardly bothered Hitler who saw Lebensraum as just another chapter in Western European colonialism.[37] Western nations like France, Holland, Britain, Italy, and indeed nineteenth-century Germany had all colonized other lands—why shouldn't modern Germany do so

too. Hitler himself referenced Britain's empire when he said, "The Russian space is our India."[38] With a tip of his hat to formal rationality, why bother inefficiently traveling halfway across the world when a colonial empire so conveniently lay next door? While colonization awaited victory in war, removal of Germany's Jews offered a more immediate solution to freeing up living space in Germany itself. If the Nazis ever came to power, removing Germany's Jews would be a priority.

From 1924 onward, the popularity of the Nazi Party increased, particularly among young, unemployed working-class men who, for reasons just mentioned, reveled in Hitler's uncouth tirades against the Jews. Appealing only to this demographic, however, was no road to political power. The Nazi Party won only 12 of 608 electoral seats in the 1928 election.[39] For subsequent elections, most obviously from 1930 onward,[40] the Party adopted a new strategy. It tailored its nationalistic message to appeal to all Germans, only emphasizing their hatred of the Jews in the presence of antisemitic audiences. Increasingly, a new, subtle, seemingly less radical, and more presidential Hitler emerged.[41] As a fearless crusader in pursuit of righting widely shared nationalistic wrongs—like the unpopular Treaty of Versailles—a new Hitler spoke largely of "honor, struggle, glory, and morality."[42] The Nazi Party's new and more appealing nationalistic campaign strategy also focused on "[e]motionally powerful but programmatically vague slogans such as 'Freedom and Bread!' and 'Order at Home and Expansion Abroad…'"[43] During his now broadly alluring feel-good speeches, Hitler reinforced this political ambiguity, advocating in favor of "*Volk* and fatherland … the eternal foundation of our morality and our faith" along with "the preservation of our *Volk*."[44] While other politicians talked of tax reform and economic policy, Hitler's affective, yet pragmatically empty, orations saw his popularity among many German patriots soar. Much has been made of Hitler's spellbinding hypnotic charisma. Although he was undoubtedly a gifted public speaker, the success behind his rising appeal was less mysterious. In terms of his ability to bring many within the crowd to his side, like the consummate salesperson, Hitler:

> would begin by acquainting himself with his audience and studying their reactions to several topics. When he had identified their desires, he would explain confidently why only his Nazi movement could fulfill them. Listeners would say to themselves, 'Of course, that's just what I have always believed.'[45]

The Nazi Party's strategic move away from mere Jew-baiting and toward their more upbeat formula of populist patriotism may have been timely because by the late 1920s one indicator at least suggests that for the first time since the defeat of 1918, German nationalism was undergoing a revival. More specifically, by the late 1920s German war memorials had changed from typically conveying grief over the enormous loss of (working-class) lives to instead emphasizing Germany's World War One battle victories, glorifying individual acts of bravery, and promoting awareness of wars that advanced German unification.[46] Those critical of the jingoistic folly of this shift were, as they usually are, criticized and then dismissed as unpatriotic.[47] Perhaps the Weimar Republic supported this stylistic change in war commemorations because, as the start of World War One showed, when class relations were tense nothing united all Germans quite like militant Prussian nationalism.[48] Obviously, the Nazi Party also sensed this cultural shift, but unlike other political parties, none were led by a fiercely passionate war veteran with oratorical skills so perfectly suited to capitalizing on a rising wave of nationalistic fervor. Then, in the wake of the 1929 stock market crash, Hitler moved on to politically exploiting the miseries of the Great Depression: Weimar democracy, he argued, was clearly failing poor Germans; however, his Nazi welfare state promised to provide for *all* [healthy Aryan] citizens. During the 1930 election, rising nationalism and the Great Depression saw the Nazis experience a phenomenal ninefold improvement at the ballot box. However, even this success only translated into 107 parliamentary seats, leaving the Nazis a minority political party.[49]

As the Nazi Party's star rose, Hitler asked fellow World War One veteran Ernst Röhm in 1930 to increase the dwindling ranks of the Nazi SA (the Nazi Party's paramilitary arm—the so-called Stormtroopers). The SA formed in 1921 and consisted mostly of disaffected working-class war veterans. Hitler promised that for his services, if the Nazi regime came to power, Röhm would be granted the authority to pursue a revolution against wealthy Jews. This deal made sense to Hitler because if the Nazis ever governed Germany, he intended to fund his Aryan welfare state by exploiting the Jews and other "subhumans…"[50]

Meanwhile, the Nazis continued to pursue their winning political strategy of appealing to the widest possible audience.[51] Finally, the election of 1932 bore real fruit: The Nazi Party won 230 parliamentary seats or 37.3% of the national vote.[52] The political might that came with obtaining just over a third of the national vote was accentuated by

the emergence of cracks within the left-wing parties, whose otherwise greater collective power was diminished due to internal squabbling.[53] The Nazi Party, therefore, emerged from the election as the single largest party in the Reichstag.

President Paul von Hindenburg, however, refused to support Hitler's bid for the chancellor's seat, but the Reichstag rejected von Hindenburg's preferred candidate, Franz von Papen, the leader of the conservative Catholic Center Party. New elections were set for the end of the year, the result of which saw support for the Nazi Party slip to around 33%. Paul von Hindenburg again overlooked Hitler as chancellor, this time favoring Kurt von Schleicher, but he too proved unpopular with the Reichstag. After some political wrangling, von Papen suggested a compromise: make Hitler chancellor but only on the condition that the Nazi Party obtain just two of the remaining eleven cabinet seats. Furthermore, Röhm was to be estranged from the Nazi Party, and Hitler would cede to the dictates of those who would become his new friends—conservatives in big business. Von Papen added that should Hitler fail to abide by these conditions, von Hindenburg could instruct the Wehrmacht (the Germany army) to remove the entire Nazi Party.[54] Von Papen's underlying intention, it transpires, was to provide Hitler with the image of political power while his fellow members of the Catholic Center Party dominated the cabinet, structurally retaining all power for themselves (and their arch-conservative party colleagues). With the Nazi Party's recent slip in the polls, a more desperate Hitler accepted von Papen's conditions, thus obtaining the coveted chancellor's seat. This is not, of course, how the sanctimonious Hitler publicly presented his accent—morally transcending politicians' usual desperation for power, his acceptance of the chancellorship had apparently "been the most difficult decision of my life."[55] With Vice Chancellor von Papen by his side, these conditions, at least in the short term, largely moderated Hitler's more covert political agenda: purging Germany's Jews, rampant military conquest, and pan-European Lebensraum.[56] Indeed, many around this point in time thought that Hitler—once renowned for his antisemitic tirades—had mellowed.[57]

Then in February 1933, the Reichstag was struck by arson—perhaps a Nazi orchestration[58]—and subsequent events took an even more favorable turn in Hitler's direction. The Nazi Party blamed the fire on the revolutionary communists, a political group that just so happened to be in direct competition with the Nazis because they too promised

to address Germany's long-standing class inequalities. Many Germans, Hitler among them, believed something had to be done to restore political stability and relieve the state from the threat of communist revolution. Whatever Hitler and the cabinet decided to do, von Hindenburg, the Wehrmacht, and Hitler's new friends in big business were unlikely to interfere—they too despised the communists. On 24 March 1933, the increasingly senile von Hindenburg supported the cabinet's introduction of the Enabling Act, an emergency law designed to protect the state against future communist threats. This act enabled the new chancellor to rule by decree for four years, thus setting the legal foundations of what would become a Nazi dictatorship.[59] Having helped draft the decree, von Papen was not concerned by the Enabling Act's long-term implications, probably because his party dominated the all-powerful cabinet. However, as Saul Friedländer notes, although the Enabling Act required that all new legislative and executive decisions be discussed with the cabinet, real power fell increasingly to Hitler alone.[60] For so-called protective reasons, Hitler's henchmen began rounding up, detaining, and occasionally killing suspected communists in hastily constructed concentration camps. The mistreatment of these "terrorists" was widely supported[61]— only those within communist circles seemed concerned.

Not everything, however, went the Nazi's way. Although across the early 1930s Röhm successfully increased the SA membership to around four million,[62] because von Papen pushed Hitler to estrange Röhm, the SA leader soon discovered he had been denied his revolution against rich Jews. An impatient Röhm and his SA leadership started initiating their own actions—the so-called second revolution—in the form of random acts of violence against wealthy Jews.[63] These attacks, and Röhm's unwillingness to stop them, signaled to others that Hitler perhaps lacked control over factions within his own party. Before long, the increasingly rogue SA started to pose a threat to Hitler's tenuous hold on the chancellor's seat. Hitler, who believed the SA were acting like "fools and destroying everything…"[64], needed to demonstrate to his new, yet wary, conservative friends that he retained total control. But to achieve this, Hitler also needed to show at least some support for the disgruntled Röhm. Hitler's fine balancing to resolve this problem involved his support for an SA-led nationwide boycott of Jewish businesses. The plan for this initiative was that the SA rank and file would inform prospective customers that the stores they were about to enter were owned by rich Jews. This information, the SA assumed, would discourage patronage and,

starved of income, these businesses would be forced to close. Although Hitler's conservative coalition partners were not as radically opposed as he was to the Jews, they were still antisemitic.[65] Thus, Hitler anticipated that von Papen and his powerful friends were unlikely to oppose a nationwide boycott of Jewish businesses, an initiative that might also placate the discontented Röhm.

Nazi Party radical Julius Streicher organized the boycott but failed to anticipate or did not care about its broader economic ramifications. The boycott, which began on 1 April 1933, precipitated a sudden slide in the German stock exchange. Most of the targeted businesses were financed by German banks, businesses that were themselves financed by national and international investors. Furthermore, because Germany's Jews only made up 1% of the national population, most of those working within these Jewish-owned businesses were non-Jews. As Jewish owners suffered, so too would their far more numerous employees. On the day of the boycotts, the public—to the surprise of the Nazi Party—reacted with a general indifference and occasionally obstinacy to the SA's information campaign.[66] Not only did the boycott damage Germany financially, it had little impact on its target. In frustration, some zealous SA members responded violently to public obstinacy, but even these actions only served to harden the public's resolve. As the boycott began to have an effect on the broader economic structures, the Nazis' conservative allies became concerned—those people Hitler could least afford to rile. All plans for future initiatives were immediately and permanently shelved.[67] For the Nazi regime, the boycott was a dismal and embarrassing failure.

This political blunder confirmed to Hitler that the most effective and realistic solution to "the Jewish question" lay not in violence, but in the gradual introduction and accumulation of antisemitic laws that, with time, would make daily life for Germany's Jews increasingly unbearable. If Jews encountered legally enforced discrimination at every turn, they might abandon all they owned and move elsewhere. A legal solution would sufficiently placate Hitler's most antisemitic supporters because it showed at least something was being done to remove Germany's Jews. And because mass Jewish emigration would open up new and lucrative business and employment opportunities, the Nazis' powerful conservative allies and many other Aryan welfare beneficiaries were unlikely to express any reservations.

On 7 April 1933, the Nazi Party introduced the Re-establishment of the Career Civil Service Act. This act determined that all German civil

servants with at least one Jewish grandparent were to be dismissed.[68] However, because von Hindenburg demanded the new law included exemptions for all Jews who had participated in or had family members killed during World War One, many Jewish civil servants managed to retain their government posts. Once again, Nazi attempts to undermine Germany's Jews had failed.[69] Moreover, factions within the SA expressed their dissatisfaction with what seemed to them to be Hitler's soft legal solution. The SA continued to engage in sporadic acts of violence against Jews,[70] and this hooliganism generated great unease among both Hitler's powerful conservative allies and the general public. And because these assaults typically traced back to Hitler's own inner ranks, the Führer decided to purge the more uncontrollable elements of the SA's leadership. In June 1934, inner-circle Nazis including Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring and SS-Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler organized to have Röhm and other rogue SA leaders assassinated during what has become known as the Night of the Long Knives. These assassinations—"the Third Reich's first mass murder"[71]—were in part designed to send a stern law-and-order message to the remaining SA rank and file.[72] But this political purge extended into a broader power grab: Some of the targets included von Papen's own colleagues. The brazen plan worked. Soon afterward von Hindenburg died, Hitler pushed a nervous von Papen out of national politics. If the public was startled by these criminal acts of violence, leading political theorist and jurist(!) Carl Schmitt helped calm their nerves by arguing that actually might-makes-right: "The Führer's deed was…not subordinate to justice, but rather it is itself supreme justice."[73] Schmitt, it transpires, was far from the only prominent academic figure to provide reckless early support for Hitler and his clearly criminal regime—philosopher Martin Heidegger also helped the Party attain a level of high-society respectability.[74] After Hitler himself successfully spun the murders in the media into an unfortunate yet morally necessary act,[75] he then merged the offices of chancellor and president, assuming the new dual position himself. From this point, the Nazi Party held total dictatorial control of Germany. Claudia Koonz captures both the speed and enormity of Hitler's achievements:

> In just over a year, he had mobilized ethnic populism to replace a constitutional democracy with a regime that could murder in the name of morality—and make its justification credible in the eyes of most Germans.[76]

With the removal of Röhm and other obstacles, Hitler was able to lay the foundations of what was at the time a politically more acceptable, legal-based solution to his Party's "Jewish question"—forced emigration. In September 1935, Hitler introduced the Nuremberg Laws, which, among other things, attempted to both define the Jews and prohibit their marriage to, and extramarital relations with, non-Jewish Germans.[77] According to this hastily introduced law, a Jewish person was anyone with three or four Jewish grandparents.[78] And because the Nazis had no definitive biological marker of Jewishness, the defining measure of a Jewish grandparent ended up being determined by baptismal records.[79] Although clearly aimed mostly at the Jews, this law also applied to Germany's Gypsies.[80]

A year later, Göring was appointed to head the Four Year Plan (a national strategy of rearmament and self-sufficiency), a time frame that hinted at when Hitler intended to go to war in the pursuit of Lebensraum.[81] The massive military preparations, in conjunction with the construction of about 1000 kilometers of Autobahn highway and numerous major public building projects in Berlin and Nuremberg, saw the rate of unemployment decrease.[82] The ensuing economic recovery—financed by what Aly describes as "fiscally irresponsible" decisions to increase the national debt[83]—boosted the German public's confidence in their increasingly beloved Führer. As one passionate supporter, Helga Schmidt said, Hitler:

> got rid of unemployment. Just about everybody had a job. He helped poor families with lots of children [who received] preferential coupons for foodstuffs, for clothing. They could buy them for less. Security for the population was restored. Crime disappeared completely. And, finally, the cultural amenities [also contributed to Hitler's popularity], like the Strength through Joy Program, inexpensive visits to the theater, and things contributing to the population's cultural life in general. That won a lot of support for him.[84]

In fact, from November 1933 the Nazi's Strength through Joy Program offered "deserving German workers" something never previously heard of before: cheap holidays abroad.[85] Also new was that the Nazis made May Day, a springtime celebration honoring workers, a paid holiday.[86] Middle- and upper-class Germans also did well: Between 1937 and 1939, the ownership of tens of thousands of cut-price Jewish businesses was transferred into the hands of no doubt delighted Aryans[87]—some

of whom did not even belong to the Nazi Party.[88] Another first was that Hitler promised that automobiles would become affordable for all German families.[89] With increased opportunities like these, it is perhaps of little surprise that Hans Dieter Schäfer argues that in the first six years of the Nazi regime, Gentiles were twice as likely to move up in German society as they had during the last six years of the Weimar Republic.[90] By 1939, there were more jobs than Germans could fill and 200,000 foreign workers were brought in to cover the shortfall.[91] With things going so well under a strong dictator who genuinely seemed to care about every class of (Aryan) German, why bother going back to Weimar-like democracy marred, as it was, having emerged from a humiliating military defeat, followed by widespread (lower) class dissension, hyperinflation, political instability, and a crippling economic depression?[92] This is why so many non-Jewish Germans described the peace period under the Nazis (1933–1939) "as a 'great time.'"[93] Too busy reveling in their own windfall, few if any of these lower- to upper-class Nazi welfare recipients stopped to contemplate who exactly was subsidizing their great times.[94]

The success of these and other achievements were also, in part, due to Hitler's management style. As Browning observes:

> the Nazi system was composed of factions centered around the Nazi chieftains, who were in perpetual competition to outperform one another. Like a feudal monarch, Hitler stood above his squabbling vassals. He allotted 'fiefs' to build up the domains of his competing vassals as they demonstrated their ability to accomplish the tasks most appreciated by the Führer.[95]

Those who succeeded in converting Hitler's desires into reality were rewarded with larger projects and more power. And the fierce competition to please Hitler saw some of his more entrepreneurial underlings attempt to anticipate the Führer's desires and then, through their own great initiative, convert these suspected wishes into reality.[96] As early as 1934, Werner Willikens, a state secretary in the Agriculture Ministry, realized how the new system worked:

> everyone with a post in the new Germany has worked best when he has, so to speak, worked towards the Führer. Very often and in many spheres it has been the case…that individuals have simply waited for orders and instructions…but in fact it is the duty of everybody to try to work towards

the Führer along the lines he would wish […] But anyone who really works towards the Führer along his lines and towards his goal will certainly both now and in the future one day have the finest reward in the form of the sudden legal confirmation of his work.[97]

The German Foreign Office's Martin Luther provides an exemplary model of someone working toward the Führer's probable goals. Luther's meteoric rise up the Nazi ranks was, in part, due to his deployment of Carl Friedrich's rule of anticipated reactions (see Volume 1), where subordinates ask themselves "how would my superior wish me to behave?" Luther had an ability to anticipate from the bottom-up what his immediate superior, von Ribbentrop, needed before anyone else. And Luther was able to do so because, compared to his fellow subordinates, he could more accurately sense what Ribbentrop's boss—the Führer—probably top-down desired.[98] During the Obedience studies, Williams, the experimenter, tended to engage in a similar "seizing the initiative from below in response to vague signals emanating from above…"[99] As the also "successful" Gestapo head Heinrich Müller explained to his men during World War Two, in the absence of written orders, they had to "get used to reading between the lines and acting accordingly."[100] The consequence was the introduction of a more modern horizontal, rather than top-down vertical, chain of command, where talented individuals from the lower ranks were free to pursue initiatives that could end up having a major influence on future policy.[101] And the Führer greatly relied on the rule of anticipated reactions, as he said himself:

> Where would I be…if I would not find people to whom I can entrust work which I myself cannot direct, tough people of whom I know they take the steps I would take myself. The best man is for me the one who bothers me least by taking upon himself 95 out of 100 decisions.[102]

Is it possible that Milgram, who was frequently absent from his laboratory, felt the same way about Williams? It transpires that Hitler's hands-off management style could also prove politically expedient. Should any of his underling's initiatives fail or even end up embarrassing the party, the Führer could always distance himself from personal responsibility because he never explicitly made such demands. And if Hitler (apparently) had no knowledge of such initiatives, he could rather conveniently claim plausible deniability, thus evading any political fallout.[103]

One area where competition in anticipating the Führer's desires remained intense was in the resolution of the all-important "Jewish question." On this issue, two main factions existed. On the one hand, there were those termed the "realists" who favored legislative changes that promoted forced emigration[104] and on the other were those termed the "strong believers,"[105] including party radicals like Julius Streicher (editor of the antisemitic publication *Der Stürmer—The Stormtrooper*) and Joseph Goebbels (head of the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda). The strong believers thought that emigration of so-called inferiors to just beyond the Reich's geographical border would only enable them to reproduce and would do nothing to eliminate their potential future threat. Thus, when it came to the "Jewish question," they believed sterilization or even extermination was the only permanent solution.[106] At this early stage, Hitler favored a policy of forced emigration, probably because it had already shown itself to be more "realistic." Two particular events, both in 1938, reinforced this preference: the Kristallnacht pogrom and the annexation of Austria.

During the summer of 1938, the Évian Conference was held in France. The aim of this meeting of political heads and various non-governmental organizations was to explore the possibility of other countries accepting Germany's unwanted Jews. However, the talks soon stalled because the German government refused to give assurances that Jewish refugees could migrate with sufficient capital with which to start new lives abroad.[107] So, even when Jews were willing to leave Germany, without capital—which the Nazi regime had frozen—most other nations in the wake of a post-1929 financial crisis refused to accept them or, at best, only small numbers. The failure of this conference ensured that most German Jews found themselves stuck in a country whose government did not want them. In frustration, the Nazi regime forced some Polish-born Jews living in Germany back to their homeland. However, the Polish government refused to accept them, arguing that because they had lived in Germany for so long, they were now German nationals. This border dispute rendered these Jews stateless refugees. On 7 November 1938, a desperate Jewish teenager, whose parents happened to be caught in this border dispute, reacted by assassinating a German embassy official in Paris. In revenge, Goebbels convinced Hitler to allow him to organize a nationwide pogrom aimed at Germany's Jews.[108] Goebbels was probably trying to capitalize on the assassination as a

means of promoting antisemitic sentiment within Germany and to claw back some of the power he and other "strong-believers" had lost to the "realists." The pogrom became known as Kristallnacht (night of crystal, or the "Night of Broken Glass"). Largely at the hands of Nazi Stormtroopers, on 9–10 November nearly 300 synagogues were burned down, hundreds of Jewish-owned businesses were vandalized and looted, and, like the communists before them, thousands of Jews were rounded up and sent to concentration camps. The pogrom ended in about one hundred Jewish fatalities.

Because pogrom-like violence of this scale had not been seen in industrialized Western Europe for such a long time,[109] Kristallnacht was a watershed event. But the pogrom also generated a variety of unforeseen problems for the Nazi regime. First, it led to the destruction of Jewish property that happened to be insured by German and international firms. Second, the chaos surrounding the pogrom sent more shock waves of fear through the volatile German stock exchange. And finally, again to the regime's surprise, the ensuing disorder disgusted significant sectors of German society.[110] These problems rendered Goebbels' pogrom a complete political disaster and thus further reinforced the realist position.[111]

Simultaneously, another major event bolstered Hitler's view that mass emigration offered the most likely "successful solution" to his Party's "Jewish problem." In pursuit of Lebensraum and to unify "all persons of German blood," the Wehrmacht annexed Hitler's homeland of Austria on 12 March 1938. Doing so meant Germany inherited Austria's 200,000 Jews[112]—even more Jews than the Nazis had been able to push out of Germany.[113] Soon afterward, one of Himmler's low-ranking Nazi bureaucrats, Adolf Eichmann, developed an "assembly-line technique" to increase the efficiency of the Austrian government's Jewish emigration application process.[114] As Eichmann explained after the war, "an idea took shape in my mind: a conveyor belt. The initial application and all the rest of the required papers are put in at one end, and the passport falls off at the other…"[115] Within six months, Eichmann's organizational process resulted in the deportation of one-quarter of all Austria's Jews. Eichmann's "realist" superiors could boast of this great success in contrast to the disastrous Kristallnacht pogrom. According to Karl Schleunes, the simultaneous failure of Kristallnacht and Eichmann's success caused a pivotal power shift within the upper echelons of the Nazi hierarchy:

> The year 1938 is marked…by…a trend towards centralization of control over Jewish policy. In part this trend reflected the newly found powers of Goering, Heydrich, and Eichmann; in part it reflected the final failure of the emotional antisemitic wing of the Nazi movement to produce a solution to the Jewish problem through pogroms. The failure of the November pogrom finally discredited the impulsive radicals and strengthened the hand of the realists whose work in 1938 promised a more effective solution through bureaucratic means. Most important of all, Hitler finally made a choice between these two approaches to the Jewish issue.[116]

As efficient organizational means to the desired political end were introduced, the "hoodlums were banished and the bureaucrats took over."[117] The "Göring-Himmler-Heydrich alliance,"[118] with the support of Eichmann's effective organizational skills, gained supremacy in dealing with the "Jewish problem," wherever it might lead. Once Göring had been placed in charge, he delegated responsibility to SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, who, on 24 January 1939, authorized the opening of the Reich Central Office for Jewish Emigration.[119] Heydrich instructed that Eichmann's more efficient approach to mass emigration was to be applied in all of Germany's larger cities.[120]

While Hitler's actions signified his support for the "realists," however, his rhetoric still tended to reflect the views of the "strong believers."[121] In a 30 January 1939 speech, he stated:

> In my life I have often been a prophet, and I have mostly been laughed at. At the time of my struggle for power, it was mostly the Jewish people who laughed at the prophecy that one day I would attain in Germany the leadership of the state and therewith of the entire nation, and that among other problems I would also solve the Jewish one. I think that the uproarious laughter of that time has in the meantime remained stuck in German Jewry's throat. […] Today I want to be a prophet again: If international finance Jewry inside and outside Europe again succeeds in precipitating the nations into a world war, the result will not be the Bolshevization of the earth and with it the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.[122]

Because of Hitler's circa 1930 public relations makeover from vitriolic Jew baiter to reflective political visionary, the above statement was

actually one of only three occasions between 1933 and 1939 where the Führer publicly expressed his racial hatred of the Jews.[123] Then, just over a month later in March 1939, Hitler certainly did his bit to encourage such a war when his troops annexed all of Czechoslovakia (including the Sudetenland). Because, in this case, the Nazis could not rely on their usual late 1930s justifications for annexing other nations' territories—like their repossessing of land "stolen" as a result of the Treaty of Versailles or coming to the aid of German settlers "suffering" at the hands of nations just beyond Germany's border—Hitler's actually far broader covert ambitions to annex more *living space* became, for the first time, undeniable.[124] On a pan-European scale, it was clear that Hitler was, first and foremost, aggressively in pursuit of Lebensraum.

When Hitler made his threat to annihilate European Jewry, it probably appeared to inner-circle Nazis as pure posture. His actions clearly supported the "realist" policy of forced emigration (and he had previously threatened the lives of German Jews, obviously with no follow-through). However, such threats were in all likelihood both posture and genuine. Posturing, because even if the Nazis gained total control of Europe sometime in the future, they had neither the strategy, nor the infrastructure, nor the technology—*no procedure*—to render them capable of exterminating such massive numbers of mostly women and children. Hitler's position here in some ways resembles Milgram's before the pilot studies: The Führer had a preconceived goal but, at that point in time, no procedure capable of converting it into a reality. Nonetheless, the point is that for Hitler, annihilation was and would remain for some time impossible.

Even so, his threats were not completely hollow. Although a means of massacring massive numbers of civilians did not then exist, Hitler's past experience hinted at the possibility that, with time, it could possibly be invented. As a courier in the Wehrmacht during World War One, Hitler had participated in about fifty battles.[125] He had experienced trench warfare firsthand during the Battle of the Somme, which had killed or wounded more than a million men in less than six months.[126] Many other high-ranking Nazis had also experienced the incredibly destructive power of modern warfare. If death on such a massive scale were possible in one context, why not in another—just change the target and obtain the same end result? Bartov argues:

while there is clearly a distinction to be made between the mutual killing of soldiers and the wholesale massacre of defenseless populations, it is crucial to realize that total war and genocide are closely related. For modern war provides the occasion and the tools, the manpower and the organization, the mentality and the imagery necessary for the perpetration of genocide. With the introduction of industrial killing to the battlefield, the systematic murder of whole peoples became both practical and thinkable: those who had experienced the former could imagine and plan, organize, and perpetrate the latter.[127]

In fact, almost two decades earlier in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had envisaged the application of the then-latest military technology to resolving his score with the Jews, suggesting that 12,000–15,000 "Hebrew corrupters" be "held under poison gas…"[128] And historical events informed Hitler that other nations during wartime had managed to exterminate massive numbers of unwanted civilians. As we shall see, just over six months after making the above (January 1939) threat, Hitler acknowledged awareness of the Armenian genocide by the Turks and had long "admired" the US extermination of its indigenous population.[129] As Germany, perhaps the most technically advanced nation in the world,[130] approached the mid-twentieth century, who really knew what might be possible under the cover of war. Perhaps war and genocide could be part of a single Nazi ideological program. Just as Milgram would use the Holocaust as an initial guide to envisage a basic experimental procedure, Hitler used previous genocides and wars to image exterminating the Jews.

Nevertheless, until 1939 all signals suggested to the "realist" in Hitler that extermination remained impossible and Jewish emigration the more practical alternative. But the "strong believer" in Hitler knew that displacing "inferiors" beyond the border would not eliminate their perceived threat. And therefore a realistic strategy capable of mass extermination is, in all likelihood, what he ultimately desired. After all, underlings referred to the annihilation of European Jewry as "the Führer's wish"—something desired but like most wishes, probably unobtainable.[131] For "realist" bureaucrats—Eichmann, his superior Reinhard Heydrich, and his superior Heinrich Himmler—who all worked competitively on the Jewish question, more power awaited those who could convert the Führer's wish into reality.

The Change from Conventional Positive to Radical Negative Eugenics

How, it must be asked, could Hitler have felt so comfortable publicly threatening all of European Jewry just two months after many German "onlookers" had shunned the violent Kristallnacht pogrom? Perhaps these onlookers were more disgusted with the disorder than the terrifying experiences of the Jewish targets.[132] Somewhat related to this, it is fairly clear that by the eve of World War Two, public support for or indifference to Nazi ideology and negative eugenics had increased. And it appears that the German public's increasing sympathy for or general indifference to the Nazi's radical worldview can, as the following argues, largely be attributed to systemic forces—the Nazi ascendency to power, and more specifically, their total control over state finances. That is, after the Nazis rose to power, they gained monopolistic control over Germany's "informational and social field."

On assuming power, and especially after the formalization of the 1935 Nuremberg Laws, the Nazi regime instituted a policy to fund the research only of those members of the German intelligentsia—academics and scientists—who were willing to become National Socialists.[133] This contractual clause inadvertently ensured that those most likely to obtain government funding were sympathetic to Nazi ideology or careerists who, concerned with their financial or social security, would tow the party line.[134] Both groups could be counted on to provide the Nazi regime with scholarly data that at least did not conflict with or, even better, bolstered the party's radical belief system. Beyond funding, other benefits for producing ideologically congruent research included rapid promotion, new employment opportunities, fellowships, lecture tours, accolades, press conferences, intensified media coverage, and selection to sit on prestigious editorial boards.[135] In fact, to uncover the latest findings in racial research, throughout Germany five multi-disciplinary antisemitic research institutes were created—what we today would call think tanks.[136] A number of German biologists, theologians, psychiatrists, and anthropologists—for example, Max Hildebert Boehm, Paul Brohmer, Eugen Fischer, Gerhard Kittel, Robert Ritter, Carl Schneider, Peter-Heinz Seraphim, and Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer—not only politically supported the Nazis, most if not all ended up producing research that reinforced the party's racist and ableist ideology. While this "veritable academic industry" thrived,[137] it was no

coincidence that all of these figures, to some degree, personally bene-fited.[138] Although the ideologically congruent researchers only made up a minority of the academy, because the regime tended to shower them with attention, they appeared to be far more representative than they actually were.[139] Thus, not only did most tenured professors refuse to play ideological ball, as long as they kept their criticisms to themselves, they were not punished. They were, however, excluded from receiving all the benefits that happened to be on offer.[140] As the scholarly silent majority sat back and watched some of their colleagues rewarded for publishing fraudulent and grossly flawed research, their resentment must have been palpable. Although the Nazi regime injected large amounts of funding into discovering an irrefutable physiological means of distin-guishing Jews from others, no robust marker—blood type, nose shape, skull size, or fingerprint pattern—was ever found.[141] As scholars in the natural sciences quickly tired of ever finding such a marker, a small yet influential group of social sciences and humanities researchers contin-ued to unravel the (apparently) latest distinctive characteristics of Jewish culture.[142]

Another understandably very small group of scholars were distin-guishable because they not only vociferously challenged their colleague's pro-Nazi research, they also attacked the intellectual foundations of Nazi ideology. For this, their career trajectories, relative to the ideologues, moved in the very opposite direction. Consider, for example, Karl Saller, an anthropologist at the University of Munich, who "attacked the con-cept of a fixed Nordic race and said that modern Germans were racially mixed. Reinhard Heydrich banned him from teaching. Saller lost his chair at Munich. His fellow university teachers did not protest, instead they started to avoid him."[143] Those scholars who refused to join the Nazi Party, or worse, like Saller, publicly challenged the regime's beliefs, were forced to take their dissenting voices elsewhere or were silenced through imprisonment or execution.[144] The insights of these critics, as Glover notes, "spread round the world, sometimes posthumously, sometimes through their writing and teaching in exile." Most importantly, "they were no longer there, in German and Austrian universities, to ask the necessary questions."[145] Germany as a whole was thereby diverted from exposure to these alternative and intellectually more rigorous perspec-tives.[146] Sustaining the Nazi's blinkered worldview was that between 1933 and 1934 about 1600 Jewish academics were fired and replaced with no doubt grateful and predictably compliant "Aryan" professors.[147] For both

the new and remaining non-Jewish scholars, the message was clear: Hitler refused "to accept disagreeable information" and this intransigent world-view would be "a dominant feature of his style of government."[148]

Germany's police, whose job it was to uphold the barrage of new and intensifying antisemitic laws, underwent a similar but probably intensified ideological filtering process.[149] In fact, during recruitment drives, prospective officers who had joined the Nazi Party before 1933 were deemed preferable over those who had not.[150] The effects of this filtering process accelerated greatly when in 1936 the uniformed police were subsumed by Himmler's Nazi SS—Hitler's elite paramilitary guard. The ideologically driven merger also saw the militarization of law enforcement across Germany.[151]

The primary and secondary teaching professions were also purged of all "undesirables"—Jews and critical Leftists.[152] There too, career advancement became near impossible without party membership.[153] Although only a third or quarter of teachers were ardent Nazis,[154] by 1936 all teachers working for the German government had joined the Nazi Party,[155] and more than two-thirds of them started attending "two-weekly 'retreats'" where they were familiarized with the application of Nazi ideology.[156] Because only a minority of them were strong believers, Koonz notes that the means of advancing Nazi doctrine at these teacher retreats was purposefully subtle—less explicitly racist and ableist, and more about promoting a positive affect toward "national pride," "ethnic solidarity," and [healthy white] egalitarian "we-consciousness…"[157] The broad and insidious consequence of this multi-pronged employment process across the academic, police, and teaching professions was that only committed ideologues, opportunists, and those fearing conflict with the party ended up filling the most influential leadership posts. Despite the varied approaches of these different professional groups when dealing with the Nazi party, the outcome was the same: All their overt criticisms against the regime essentially evaporated.

For Aryans, more employment and advancement opportunities followed when Goebbels eliminated all Jewish influence from the press, radio, publishing houses, and film industry.[158] This policy stripped Germany's Jews of any opportunity to publicly respond to their mistreatment or to appeal to the sympathies of the wider public. Then again, it was not as if the Jews or anyone else for that matter could complain because as early as 1934 the Nazis had introduced laws like the Heimtückegesetz, which banned all political slander and critical dissent

against them.[159] And as early as 1933, Party headquarters started sending infringement notices to non-Jewish Germans observed maintaining social relations with Jews. As one person who had received three such infringement notices told a friend married to a Jewish woman, their "pleasant chats…must unfortunately cease."[160] Nor were these threats empty: It got to the point where just showing kindness to Jews could result in arrest.[161] Some people who were previously "anything but a Nazi" started, for example, wearing swastika lapel pins. They did so not because they had been politically converted, but because doing so circumvented suspicions of them being political agitators.[162] Fearful or simply jaded into submission, the socially easiest path for those personally critical of the Nazi's discriminatory measures was silence.

Drawing on Luhmann's scholarly legacy, Stefan Kühl argues that most Germans' silence to the Nazi's antisemitic legal assault generated an antisemitic "fictional consensus…"[163] This antisemitic fictional consensus was the false perception among most Germans that—because Goebbels flooded the media with images of massive crowds of Germans captivated by Hitler's every word[164]—the Nazi's racial policies must have been unanimously popular. The perception surrounding the popularity of the Nazi's discriminatory policies also had a powerful controlling influence on most German's everyday social interactions. That is, with time Germans assumed that their fellows would react with universal approval to their overt support for the Nazis and universal disapproval to any criticism they might have of the regime. So those Germans who personally disagreed with the regime's treatment of "inferiors" felt an intensifying pressure to keep such views to themselves, thereby securing their critical silence.[165] Importantly, Kühl adds that the critical silence, however, only ended up fueling the antisemitic fictional consensus because this apparent consensus was founded on the "untested assumption" that everybody else agreed with the Nazi's legal assault.[166] Others, like Uwe Storjohann, captured the essence of this fictional consensus, describing Germany under the Nazis as a "nationally stable union of non-understanders, keep-quieters, head-nodders, deaf-ear- and blind-eye-turners…"[167] And if the Jewish community themselves never complained about their advancing social and legal isolation (they of course couldn't), perhaps, in the minds of the unreflective majority, the Jew's hardships were perhaps not all that harsh after all.

Anyway, across the second half of the 1930s the Nazi intellectuals' (pseudo) scientific research, in conjunction with additional Nazi

spin, was injected into the national educational curriculum,[168] newspapers (particularly Streicher's "semi-pornographic" *Der Stürmer* and Walter Gross's more "breezy middlebrow" *Neues Volk* (*New Volk*)),[169] Nazi youth organizations,[170] exhibitions,[171] and movie productions. Consider, for example, the National Socialist Office of Racial Politics and their mid-1930s production of a variety of documentary films with titles like *The Sins of the Fathers*, *Sins against Blood and Race*, and *Palaces for the Mentally Ill*, all of which subtly contrasted "degenerate[s]" with healthy athletic Nordic types.[172] Then in 1940, the German film industry released their two most infamous antisemitic movies: *Jud Süss* (Jew Suess) and *Der ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew). As Friedländer notes, the aim of these subsidized films was the same, "to elicit fear, disgust, and hatred."[173] Although *Der ewige Jude* was a flop,[174] in just a few years *Jud Süss*, a movie that repeats verbatim Martin Luther's violent solution to the "Jewish question" had been viewed by 20.3 million Germans.[175] As one viewer noted, "The Jew is shown here as he really is […] I would have loved to wring his neck."[176] For some viewers, the movie clearly had its intended effect. The fact that criticizing *Jud Süss* was illegal makes Goebbels' reaction to its launch somewhat farcical: "The film is a wild success. One hears only enthusiastic comments" and "Everybody praises the film to the skies…"[177]

So around the start of World War Two, it appears a relentless propaganda machine in the near absence of any conflicting information persuaded many ordinary Germans that a society without "inferiors" would probably be good for the Reich.[178] As Oskar Gröning, an SS administrator later stationed at Auschwitz, put it, "We were convinced by our worldview that there was a great conspiracy of Jewishness against us…"[179] Therefore, during the early 1940s, Gröning "carried on working at Auschwitz not just because he was ordered to but because, having weighed the evidence put before him, he thought that the extermination program was right."[180] As the more directly involved perpetrator, Kurt Möbius admitted:

> We police went by the phrase, 'Whatever serves the state is right, whatever harms the state is wrong.' I would also like to say that it never even entered my head that these orders could be wrong. Although I am aware that it is the duty of the police to protect the innocent I was however at that time convinced that the Jewish people were not innocent but guilty. I believed all the propaganda that Jews were criminals and subhuman [*Untermenschen*] and that they were the cause of Germany's decline after the First World War.[181]

Because, as we shall see, the Nazi regime socially constructed Jews as partisans and crooks, morally self-righteous killers like Möbius really did perceive "themselves as the executors of state measures taken against killers, murderers, and criminals."[182] For Möbius and many others, the German people were (apparently) victims of various injustices, and it was these kinds of iniquities that helped fuel what developed into an unwavering and unreflective pursuit of self-righteous revenge. Although the Nazi's insidious social engineering program aimed to, at least, secure the wider German public's indifference to the fate of German Jewry, for some, as the above comments illustrate, it potentially paved the way for something proactively far more radical. And this purposefully calculated (mis)information campaign also went further than converting the removal of Jews and other inferiors into a social good—those Germans who chose to maintain friendly relations with so-called inferiors would, as Müller-Hill implied earlier, be responsible for destroying advanced Germanic civilization.[183] So not only was previously bad behavior morally inverted into a social good, what was once considered good was reconfigured into something really bad.[184] One of the Nazi's greatest obstacles during their intense propaganda campaign was that, as De Swaan points out, many Germans had been exposed to other religious, educational, and familial moral codes. Consequently, "[t]hey were not completely devoid of a moral sense…" And, much like during the Obedience studies, when insufficiently indoctrinated people were faced by intense moral dilemmas, "inner conflict[s]" could plague their conscience.[185]

In summary, the cumulative consequence of the Nazi's social engineering program was that over time sectors within the German intelligentsia, teaching profession, and entire security apparatus (among other groups) contributed to and helped reinforce the regime's self-imposed "ideological echo chamber…"[186] From every direction within this chamber, German society was encouraged to believe that they were the master race and that in order to save advanced Germanic civilization, *something* monumental needed to be done about the impending threat posed by those of inferior blood. Again, because all the normally credible and authoritative societal voices explicitly or passively seemed to agree with Hitler, then, in the eyes of ordinary Germans, perhaps Nazi ideology was not all that radical after all. In fact, for many Germans the Nazis provided a unique form of political leadership: Only they were willing to stand up and protect all that was good and great, unlike all those "liberal-pacifist" fools elsewhere in the world who not only paved the way

for the destruction of superior Aryan blood, but had even been duped into spending "great sums of money" to protect "criminals and mentally deranged" inferiors.[187] It was for this reason, as Neitzel and Welzer astutely observe:

> the entire collection of events known as the "Third Reich" and the violence it produced can be seen as a gigantic experiment, showing what sane people who see themselves as good are capable of if they consider something to be appropriate, sensible, or correct.[188]

As Roy Baumeister argues, when the world is viewed through the average German's eyes during the lead up to World War Two—we are morally good, others are degenerate and evil[189]—Nazi ideology no longer appears, as many see it today: the epitome of evil. Instead, when German citizenry's carefully manufactured and purposefully blinkered worldview is considered, their movement toward an increasingly violent solution becomes both terrifyingly logical and comprehensible.[190] Led by an apparent "fearless crusader for justice," many of those working within the Nazi regime genuinely came to believe they were pursuing the morally right, even righteous path.[191] And if there had been some potential merit to this inherently supercilious belief system—those of the Jewish faith, Gypsies, Eastern Europeans, and those with disabilities really did pose a genetic, social, and cultural threat to "advanced" Western civilization—then in the name of free speech, perhaps such issues merited public debate. But the problem was not just that they were wrong, the intractable Nazis had no interest in, and even actively went to enormous lengths to avoid, exposure to conflicting critical views. They simply could not bear to have the validity of their bigoted worldview challenged and then demolished by more informed critics like Karl Saller. And that most Germans were socially, financially, and materially doing so well under the Nazis only rendered this majority more receptive or at least amenable to Hitler's covertly destructive political agenda. Thus, overarching structural forces (the legal assault, selective employment practices, and the Nazi's self-imposed "ideological echo chamber") along with the showering of various self-interested benefits likely played a crucial role in many German's avid support for or indifference toward the Nazi regime's increasingly radical and destructive ambitions. Furthermore, because each change the Nazis introduced was, on its own, small and therefore seemingly insignificant, with time their many little changes added up to the point that German society was imperceptibly blunted to the reality that, in the spirit of shifting baselines, "fundamental change" had taken hold.[192]

This was the subtle, creeping, and cumulatively effectual (mis)information process that rendered many Germans in favor of or indifferent to the Nazi's radical negative eugenics-based social policies, whatever exactly they ended up entailing. The key achievement of the Nazi's social engineering was that many so-called inferiors were moved beyond "the boundaries of the universe of obligation…"[193] It was therefore implied to the German citizenry that as far as their government was concerned, whatever hardships might befall the Jews and other "sub-humans," they need not fret over it. These people simply no longer mattered. And should, in the near future, the Nazi regime instruct those in the German armed forces to harm these "inferiors," by the late 1930s such a request was no longer outside but tentatively within the parameters of one's expected duties. That is, as Kühl convincingly argues, as the start of World War Two approached, the Nazi propaganda machine ensured that many members in the German armed forces were likely to "view an order to kill as an expectation within the framework of their organizational zone of indifference."[194] Furthermore, because "the systematic disenfranchisement of the Jews had" by this point in time, "progressed so far that not a single member" of the German armed forces in the soon to be occupied territories "had to worry about being punished by the authorities if they assaulted Jews in violation of the applicable laws and regulations."[195] Thus, as the start of the war approached, these men would have sensed that if Germany proved victorious, they could—if they so chose—very likely assault "inferiors" with total impunity.

The Nazi Decent into World War Two

As mentioned, to reverse all those past injustices like the Treaty of Versailles and perhaps, in the process, make Germany even greater, central to Hitler's covert ideological vision was that Germany go to war. In pursuit of Lebensraum, in March 1939 Hitler started to plan an invasion of Poland. First, the Wehrmacht would attack Poland from the west, and by prior arrangement, the Soviet Union would invade Poland from the east. After defeating Poland, the invaders intended to split the spoils with the western half going to Germany and the Soviets gaining the eastern half. The Nazis anticipated that Poland's leadership class—politicians, intellectuals, and government officials—were likely to encourage their citizenry to resist German hegemony. Hitler, therefore, believed that securing Polish docility necessitated this group's elimination. Fearing

high-ranking members of the Wehrmacht might resist Hitler's desires, Heydrich and others were charged with forming the Einsatzgruppen, a paramilitary force. The Einsatzgruppen consisted of about two thousand carefully selected SS men who, according to SS-Brigadeführer Werner Best, were chosen on the grounds that they were likely to work "ruthlessly and harshly to achieve National Socialist aims…"[196] Lothar Beutel (one of the commanders) said that Heydrich told the Einsatzgruppen leadership on 18 August 1939 that as far as the Polish resistance movement and its leaders were concerned, "everything was allowed, including shootings and arrests."[197] Heydrich also supplied the Einsatzgruppen with a list of 61,000 Polish Jews and Christians who were believed to be members of "anti-German" groups.[198] Four days after Heydrich's speech to the Einsatzgruppen leadership and just over a week before the invasion, on 22 August 1939, Hitler informed his top military commanders:

> Our strength is in our quickness and our brutality. Genghis Khan had millions of women and children killed by his own will and with a gay heart. History sees only in him a great state builder. […] Thus for the time being I have sent to the East only my "Death's Head Units" with the order to kill without pity or mercy all men, women, and children of Polish race or language. Only in such a way will we win the vital space that we need. Who still talks nowadays of the extermination of the Armenians?[199]

But why would Germans agree to pursue such premeditated plans to annex Polish territory and kill its citizenry—how could they support such blatant skulduggery that might put their own lives at risk? As Göring said after World War Two, kindling the German people's support for the Polish invasion was, for the Nazi regime, a minor obstacle:

> Why, of course, the people don't want war […] Why would some poor slob on a farm want to risk his life in a war when the best that he can get out of it is to come back to his farm in one piece. Naturally, the common people don't want war; neither in Russia nor in England nor in America, nor for that matter in Germany. That is understood. But, after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy or a fascist dictatorship or a Parliament or a Communist dictatorship. […] voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country.[200]

Indeed, on Hitler's orders, the SS intelligence service fabricated an attack by the Polish military on a German radio station proximate to the shared border.[201] This pretense, as Göring put it, proved sufficient in securing public support for the Polish invasion. For the invading German forces, this attack secured "a belief in the justice of conquest…"[202] Bolstering this pretense was the belief common among those like Hitler that when colonizing other nations it is "morally acceptable—especially in war-time—to extinguish 'lower' civilizations that stood in the way of 'progress.'"[203] And should any of the inferiors prove lucky enough to survive the onslaught, the colonizer would then bestow on them the (apparently) invaluable gift of a "higher" civilization. Whatever the outcome of the colonizing feat, the invaders would rather conveniently end up reconfiguring their destructive aggression into an all-round social good.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined, within the democratic state of Germany, the disconcerting rise and increasing popularity of Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party. The Party's political ascendency was largely due to a combination of the cunning political strategy of appealing to the desires of all Germans and an uncanny ability to capitalize on every bit of luck that fell their way. Although already effective with so little, when the Party ascended to power and accessed the enormous resources of the German state, Goebbels seized this opportunity to promulgate the Nazi's ideological vision by, as Milgram would put it, restructuring the social and informational field. The Nazis seductively appealed to the inferiority complex that happened to lie at the heart of the average non-Jewish German: "Aryans" are genetically superior, a master race is entitled to more than others, and, in a quest to make Germany great, the Nazi Party intended on giving Germans all they (apparently) deserved. Across Germany, the Nazi's expansionist ideology and contempt for so-called inferiors spread. This imperialist vision of grandeur and the general disdain (or indifference) it engendered toward "subhumans" proved infectious. Within many Germans, the dark side of this infection expressed itself in the form of vanity, hubris, and a militaristic yearning for a united omnipotent Germany to, much like during the nineteenth century, dominate.

The success of Goebbels' social engineering program was largely due to the Nazi Party's structural and systematic elimination of dissenting

and simultaneous concentration of consenting "expert" public voices. For many ordinary Germans, the Nazi Party seemed to know the best way forward—anybody who was somebody said so and nobody seems to disagree. And as the Nazi's imperialist ambitions and their unrelenting disparagement of the infectious "other" spread, simultaneously the average German became socially, financially, and materially better off, albeit typically at the expense of those "others."[204] The prospect of reaching the top proved too irresistible for many. Blind faith in their intensely antisemitic Führer soared and many Germans, with a "well-developed calculating instinct for their private interests,"[205] decided they would follow him wherever he might lead them.

Notes

1. Milgram (1974, p. 7).
2. Quoted in Landau (1994, pp. 46–47).
3. Browning (2004, p. 4).
4. Quoted in Wistrich (2001, p. 1).
5. Glover (1999, p. 195).
6. Quoted in Friedlander (1995, p. 4).
7. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 62).
8. Quoted in Glover (1999, p. 195).
9. Kühne (2010, p. 15) and Aly (2006, p. 32).
10. Kühne (2010, p. 15).
11. Binding and Hoche (1920, as cited in van Pelt and Dwork 1996, p. 63).
12. Baur et al. (1921).
13. Quoted in Rubenstein and Roth (1987, p. 141).
14. Friedlander (1995, p. 8).
15. Rubenstein and Roth (1987, p. 141).
16. Between 1907 and 1945, 45,127 people were sterilized in the USA (Koonz 2003, p. 105). As we shall see, in just a few years the Nazis sterilized far greater numbers of Germans (see Lifton 1986, pp. 24, 27).
17. Traverso (2003, p. 122).
18. Friedlander (1995, p. 18) and Müller-Hill (1988, p. 28).
19. Quoted in Kevles (1995, p. 116, as cited in Klautke 2016, p. 26).
20. Hitler ([1925] 1943).
21. Quoted in Wistrich (2001, p. 34).
22. Kühne (2010, p. 34) and Neitzel and Welzer (2012, p. 32).
23. Quoted in Burleigh and Wippermann (1991, p. 42).
24. Aly (2006, p. 13).
25. Quoted in Friedländer (1997, p. 75).

26. See, for example, Fest (1974, p. 37).
27. Lukacs (1997, pp. 65–75, as cited in Breitman 2000, p. 13).
28. Kühne (2010, p. 16).
29. Friedlander (1995, p. 13).
30. Müller-Hill (1988, p. 22).
31. Quoted in Waite (2000, p. 176).
32. Browning (2004, p. 10).
33. Koonz (2003, p. 9).
34. Rossino (2003, p. 2).
35. Hitler (1940, pp. 67–100, as cited in Rutherford 2007, p. 55).
36. Wistrich (2001, p. 38).
37. Arendt (1958, pp. 121–267) and Browning (2004, p. 14).
38. Hitler (2013, p. 28).
39. Wistrich (2001, p. 44).
40. Longerich (2010, p. 16).
41. Longerich (2010, p. 17).
42. Koonz (2003, p. 27).
43. Koonz (2003, p. 70).
44. Quoted in Koonz (2003, p. 75).
45. Koonz (2003, p. 18). As Hitler said in *Mein Kampf* (quoted in Koonz 2003, pp. 17–18), the orator "can always see in the faces of his listeners…" and can use these cues to determine the destination of a warmly received speech: "The speaker will always let himself be borne by the great masses in such a way that instinctively the very words come to his lips that he needs to speak to the hearts of his audience. If he errs … he has the living correction before him."
46. Behrenbeck (1999, p. 336, as cited in Neitzel and Welzer 2012, p. 36).
47. Neitzel and Welzer (2012, p. 36).
48. Kühne (2010, p. 14).
49. Wistrich (2001, p. 44).
50. Kühne (2010, p. 34).
51. Breitman (2000, p. 17).
52. Wistrich (2001, p. 44).
53. Bauer (2001, p. 32).
54. Schleunes (1970, pp. 68–69).
55. Quoted in Koonz (2003, p. 33).
56. Koonz (2003, p. 79).
57. See Koonz (2003, p. 31).
58. See Hett (2014).
59. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, pp. 95–96).
60. Friedländer (1997, p. 17).
61. Koonz (2003, p. 38).
62. Schleunes (1970, p. 66).

63. Koonz (2003, p. 84).
64. Quoted in Koonz (2003, p. 85).
65. Browning (2004, p. 9).
66. Schleunes (1970, p. 94).
67. Schleunes (1970, pp. 62–91).
68. Krausnick and Broszat (1970, p. 44).
69. Schleunes (1970, pp. 102–109).
70. See Goldhagen (1996, pp. 90–95) and Koonz (2003, pp. 37–38).
71. Höhne (1984, p. 145, as cited in Markusen and Kopf 1995, p. 124).
72. Browning (1978, p. 3).
73. Quoted in Koonz (2003, p. 98).
74. Koonz (2003, pp. 49–56, 68).
75. As Hitler said in his 1934 essay *The Führer Protects the Law*, "If I am reproached with not turning to the law-courts for sentences, I can only say in this hour, I was responsible for the fate of the German nation and thereby the supreme judge of the German people" (quoted in Kershaw 1998, p. 519, as cited in Reemtsma 2012, p. 183).
76. Koonz (2003, p. 99).
77. Browning (1978, p. 3).
78. Koonz (2003, p. 187).
79. Koonz (2003, p. 171).
80. Hancock (1988, p. 59, as cited in Markusen and Kopf 1995, p. 124).
81. Browning (1978, p. 4).
82. Johnson and Reuband (2005, p. 340). Ironically, these successful and popular policies were the brainchild of the last Weimar Republic Chancellor Kurt von Schleicher and his "pro-labour measures" (Cesarani 2016, p. 29).
83. Aly (2006, p. 3). See also Aly (2006, pp. 317–318).
84. Quoted in Johnson and Reuband (2005, p. 177).
85. Cesarani (2016, p. 52). See also Aly (2006, p. 21).
86. Koonz (2003, p. 81).
87. Cesarani (2016, pp. 135, 162, 210) and Koonz (2003, pp. 191–192).
88. Koonz (2003, pp. 191–192).
89. Aly (2006, p. 21).
90. Schäfer (2009, p. 18, as cited in Neitzel and Welzer 2012, p. 33).
91. Schäfer (2009, p. 12, as cited in Neitzel and Welzer 2012, p. 33).
92. Cesarani (2016, p. 12).
93. Schäfer (2009, p. 18, as cited in Neitzel and Welzer 2012, p. 33).
94. Aly (2006, pp. 4, 41, 48).
95. Browning (1978, p. 2).
96. Breton and Wintrobe (1986, pp. 911–916).
97. Quoted in Bloxham and Kushner (2005, p. 127).
98. Browning (1978, p. 82).

99. Browning (2004, p. 37).
100. Quoted in Matthäus (2007, p. 234).
101. Aly (2006, p. 24).
102. Quoted in Browning (2004, p. 243).
103. See Longerich (2005, p. 214).
104. Schleunes (1970, p. 216).
105. Wilhelm (1997, p. 118).
106. Wilhelm (1997, pp. 118–119).
107. Browning (1978, p. 17).
108. Kershaw (2000, pp. 109–110).
109. The closest modern parallel was perhaps the 1905 pogrom in Odessa, Ukrainian.
110. See Kershaw (1983, pp. 262–263) and Browning (2004, pp. 9–10).
111. Schleunes (1970, pp. 214–254).
112. Schleunes (1970, p. 229).
113. Markusen and Kopf (1995, p. 125).
114. Browning (1978, p. 5).
115. Quoted in Cesarani (2004, p. 67).
116. Schleunes (1970, p. 216).
117. Rubenstein (1978, p. 27).
118. Browning (1978, p. 5).
119. Browning (1978, pp. 6, 19).
120. Fleming (1984, p. 43).
121. This was because Hitler "instinctively" sympathized with the "strong-arm" sector of the Nazi regime (see Mommsen 1986, pp. 102, 107).
122. Quoted in Friedländer (1997, pp. 309–310).
123. Koonz (2003, p. 100).
124. Cesarani (2016, p. 226).
125. Victor (1998, p. 55, as cited in Rhodes 2002, p. 28).
126. See Middlebrook (2006).
127. Bartov (1996, p. 50).
128. Quoted in Glover (1999, p. 321).
129. Toland (1976, p. 702). See Madley (2015) for more on the American genocide debate.
130. See Colins (2004, as cited in De Swaan 2015, p. 43).
131. See Fleming (1984, pp. 30, 44).
132. Kershaw (1983, pp. 262–263) argues that among most people there was a "broad swell of disapproval" and "disgust" with Kristallnacht—a point supported by other specialist historians (see Browning 2004, pp. 9–10). But this disapproval was probably more about the actions than the target because not only were "'Dynamic' Jew-haters" a small minority of the population, active supporters of the Jews were even rarer (Kershaw 1983, p. 275).

133. Friedlander (1995, p. 126) and Koonz (2003, pp. 191–197).
134. Müller-Hill (1988, pp. 14, 18–19, 29).
135. Koonz (2003, pp. 195, 200).
136. Koonz (2003, pp. 201–202).
137. Koonz (2003, p. 191).
138. See Koonz (2003, pp. 195, 197, 199), Mosse (1966, pp. 59, 62, 65), and Müller-Hill (1988, pp. 12, 18, 19, 36, 37, 38, 41, 57, 61, 74, 79, 85–86, 99).
139. Koonz (2003, p. 214).
140. Koonz (2003, p. 195).
141. Koonz (2003, pp. 196–197, 215).
142. Koonz (2003, pp. 197, 201–202).
143. Glover (1999, p. 384).
144. Glass (1997, p. 65), Glover (1999, pp. 366, 384), Sereny (1974, p. 62), and Westermann (2005, p. 36). The Nazis even imprisoned their most ardent supporters when they strayed from the party line (see Earl 2009, p. 149).
145. Glover (1999, p. 366).
146. This carefully crafted social environment shares some similarities with the Obedience studies. That is, Milgram also constructed an artificial social environment where, unlike outside the laboratory, participants were blocked from any sources of support for the widely accepted normative view that it is wrong to hurt an innocent person. On a microcosmic scale, Milgram also ensured that the abnormal became normal, and then this new normal appeared to be normative.
147. Bracher (1970, p. 269, as cited in Markusen and Kopf 1995, p. 212).
148. Mommsen (1986, p. 113).
149. See Bloxham and Kushner (2005, p. 122).
150. Kühl (2016, pp. 23, 195).
151. Stone (2010, pp. 101–102).
152. Koonz (2003, p. 135).
153. Cesarani (2016, p. 55).
154. Koonz (2003, p. 149).
155. Cesarani (2016, p. 51).
156. Cesarani (2016, p. 55).
157. Koonz (2003, pp. 156–162).
158. Cesarani (2016, pp. 51–52) and Markusen and Kopf (1995, p. 124).
159. Johnson and Reuband (2005, p. 347).
160. Quoted in Kühne (2010, p. 39). With intentions of ensuring the same outcome, officials from other government departments, for example, the Farmer's League, were known to take photos of non-Jewish Germans attending Jewish funerals (see Cesarani 2016, p. 119). Similarly, if the wives of Nazi leaders or civil service workers continued to shop at Jewish-owned stores, they could find their names published in *Der Stürmer* (Koonz 2003, p. 44).

161. Friedländer (2007, p. 53).
162. Koonz (2003, p. 75).
163. Kühl (2016, pp. 48–49).
164. See, for example, the carefully staged photograph of almost fifty young wide-eyed Germans clambering over themselves to hear the Führer's (apparently) magical words of wisdom (Koonz 2003, p. 82).
165. It can be argued that Milgram's baseline experiment utilized, as a binding mechanism, a type of fictional consensus—participants quickly discovered that unlike in the normal world, in Milgram's (purposefully) isolated laboratory setting, they were the only one with the power of choice that was against the infliction of excruciating shocks. Everybody else—the experimenter, his absent boss Dr. Milgram, and the all-powerful institution of Yale University—appeared to support the infliction of more shocks. With no social support in favor of their preference, most socially isolated participants retreated into a critical silence and caved to the environment's new normal by doing as they were told.
166. Kühl (2016, p. 48). See also Kühne (2010, p. 156) and Longerich (2010, pp. 31–32).
167. Storjohann (1993, p. 100, as cited in Kühl 2016, p. 49).
168. Mosse (1966, p. 59) argues, "Instruction in race became compulsory in the Prussian schools after September 1933 and eventually in all German schools. Secondary schools were required to teach heredity, racial science, and family as well as population policies."
169. Mommsen (1986, p. 101) and Koonz (2003, p. 117).
170. Cesarani (2016, p. 54).
171. Koonz (2003, p. 192).
172. Koonz (2003, p. 125).
173. Friedländer (2007, p. 102).
174. Cesarani (2016, p. 420).
175. Friedländer (2007, p. 100).
176. Quoted in Friedländer (2007, p. 100).
177. Quoted in Friedländer (2007, p. 100).
178. As Koonz (2003, p. 218) notes: "By the late 1930s it appeared that most Germans tacitly approved of persecution as long as they did not feel personally threatened or inconvenienced."
179. Quoted in Rees (2005, pp. 132–133).
180. Rees (2005, pp. 133–134).
181. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, pp. 220–221). See also Kühne (2010, p. 72).
182. Kühl (2016, p. 152). The inherent self-righteousness that many Germans felt in regard to their killing of "bad" people apparently "deserving of harm" is a volatile mind-set that I would argue is still

quite common today. Consider, for example, that most viewers of Quentin Tarantino's blockbuster *Inglorious Basterds* are unlikely to question the immorality of the enormous amount of killing taking place before their eyes—Nazis are bad and therefore they deserve to be killed by the vengeful American Jewish soldiers. The irony is that just before and during World War Two, Nazis like Möbius could have watched a version of *Inglorious Basterds*—except with Nazis on a hunt in the forests for (apparent) partisan Jews—and he likely would have cheered along much as many viewers do today when the Nazis in Tarantino's original version get their comeuppance. Of course, there is great danger in this "good versus evil" narrative: People who kill for morally "good" reasons only end up providing the survivors of their attacks with the same morally self-righteous justification for then trying to kill them; thereby, potentially generating a never ending cycle of violence (Baumeister 1997, pp. 31–96).

183. In a confidential Easter message in 1933 to all his pastors, Bishop Otto Dibelius, a prominent German Protestant clergyman warned, "One cannot ignore that Jewry has played a leading role in all the destructive manifestations of modern civilization" (quoted in Friedländer 1997, p. 42). See also Wistrich (2001, p. 95).

184. Kühne (2010, pp. 60–62) and Neitzel and Welzer (2012, pp. 30–35, 149).

185. De Swaan (2015, p. 248).

186. Hayes (2017, p. 144).

187. This is according to Walter Gross, the Nazi physician and eventual head of the National Socialist Office of Racial Politics (quoted in Koonz 2003, p. 125).

188. Neitzel and Welzer (2012, p. 25).

189. Baumeister (1997, pp. 31–96).

190. Neitzel and Welzer (2012, p. 9).

191. Koonz (2003, p. 29) and Baumeister (1997, pp. 34–38).

192. Neitzel and Welzer (2012, p. 13).

193. Fein (1979, p. 33).

194. Kühl (2016, p. 55). Kühl adds: the main purpose of the "flood of propaganda – and the research literature often overlooks this – was not actually to directly motivate the men. Organizations can motivate their members much more easily by issuing specific instructions through their formal communication channels and by drawing up general regulations. Instead, my theory is that this ideological training ensured that the policemen's participation in ghetto clearances, deportations, and mass executions would fall within their zone of indifference" (2016, p. 54).

195. Kühl (2016, pp. 136–137).

196. Quoted in Rossino (2003, p. 12).
197. Quoted in Rossino (2003, p. 15).
198. Quoted in Rossino (2003, p. 15).
199. Quoted in Breitman (1991, p. 43).
200. Quoted in Gilbert (1947, pp. 278–279).
201. Cesarani (2016, p. 231).
202. Koonz (2003, p. 222).
203. Koonz (2003, p. 7). On this note, consider, for example, L. Frank Baum, author of The Wizard of Oz, who said as a journalist in South Dakota in the late nineteenth century: "The Whites, by law of conquest, by justice of civilization, are masters of the American continent and the best safety of the frontier settlements will be secured by the total annihilation of the few remaining Indians. Why not annihilation? Their glory has fled, their spirit broken, their manhood effaced; better that they should die than live like miserable wretches that they are" (Stannard 1992, p. 126, as cited in Koonz 2003, p. 7).
204. Mommsen (1986, p. 115).
205. de Mildt (1996, p. 311).

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CHAPTER 3

World War Two and Nazi Forays
into the Killing of Civilians

On 1 September 1939, the Wehrmacht invaded Poland, an act that initiated French and British declarations of war, and thus signaled the start of World War Two. With their massive numbers, superior weaponry, and Blitzkrieg tactics, the Wehrmacht quickly swept Polish defenders aside. Then, on 17 September, the Soviets attacked Poland from the east. As anticipated, the Polish civilian population fiercely resisted the Germans, typically in the form of sniper attacks. The Wehrmacht's usual wartime policy in dealing with civilian resistance was twofold. First, captured resisters were tried in a military court and if found guilty, executed. Second, if resisters evaded capture, community leaders were taken hostage and their lives threatened if the partisan activity continued.[1] However, on 3 September Himmler provided the German armed forces with a third and much swifter option: a shoot-to-kill authorization that allowed for the circumvention of a military trial.[2] Some members of the German armed forces interpreted the authorization as a right to kill whomever and whenever they wanted; indeed, this is what it was. Armed with such powers, sectors of the Einsatzgruppen occasionally engaged in mob-like violence, acts which greatly concerned the Wehrmacht Commander-in-Chief Walther von Brauchitsch.[3] Brauchitsch was so angry that on 21 September Himmler had to send Heydrich to personally smooth matters over with the powerful chief commander. Brauchitsch demanded one thing, the removal of Himmler's shoot-to-kill order. In fear of having pushed influential figures in the Wehrmacht too far too soon, a few days later Himmler granted Brauchitsch's

request.[4] Although Brauchitsch's resistance signaled to the Nazi leadership that some of the Wehrmacht's top brass was unwilling to flaunt international military law, they also noticed that some were.[5]

By early October, only five weeks into the campaign, Poland conceded defeat. Soon thereafter, the Germans divided their half of the new territory into two: a western section, which they called the Incorporated Territory (annexed into Germany), and an eastern section called the General Government (a semi-independent zone occupied by Germany and governed by Nazi lawyer Hans Frank). Germany's rapid expansion had, however, exposed a flaw in Eichmann's emigration model for dealing with the "Jewish problem": The more nations the Wehrmacht conquered, the more Jews Germany inherited. There were 3 million Polish Jews,[6] of which 600,000 to 700,000 lived in the now German Incorporated Territory. These numbers do not include the 18 million Christian Poles that the Nazi leadership would have to uproot when the time came to make room for in-coming ethnic German settlers. Before the new German/Soviet border tightened, the Germans tried to push as many of the unwanted Poles into the new Soviet territory. However, this was no long-term solution; it was only a matter of time before the Soviet authorities found out.

Eventually, the Nazi leadership decided to expel Poles from the Incorporated Territory and force them into the General Government. Polish Jews were to be sent to a reservation located near the General Government township of Nisko (in the eastern Lublin district). In an eager attempt to impress his superiors, on 17 October 1939 Eichmann tried to deport 912 Austrian Jews by train to the Nisko reservation. However, this attempt at mass deportation proved to be a more difficult exercise than he anticipated. Complicating issues included the higher priority authorities placed on housing the influx of ethnic German settlers over relocating German Jews, along with other economic and logistical issues.[7] Amid the ensuing chaos, Eichmann's display of initiative backfired and, as a result, most of the Jews were returned to Austria.[8] The problem of the Polish Jews remained, but soon after Heydrich announced a new policy: "in order to have a better possibility of control and later deportation," Polish Jews across both the Incorporated Territory and General Government were to be concentrated in designated ghettos in all the major Polish cities.[9] Implementation of this interim solution took place in 1940. Meanwhile, from early to mid-1940, Arthur Greiser (Governor of the Wartheland, a province within

the Incorporated Territory) boasted in Nazi circles of his desire to render his fiefdom *judenfrei* ("free of Jews"). To fulfill this desire, Greiser requested Hans Frank in the more eastern General Government to accept a few hundred thousand Wartheland Jews. Frank, who also one day hoped to make the same claim about his territory, balked at Greiser's demand. Adding to the ongoing complexities of what exactly was to be done with the Jews, Frank did not want his fiefdom to become a dumping ground for others' unwanted peoples.[10]

Once secured in the Polish ghettos, there remained much debate over where to relocate all of these Jews. The realist Nazi bureaucrats identified a few potential locations, the most popular of which became possible with the successful spring 1940 conquests of Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, Luxemburg, and France. Jews were to be deported by ship to the island of Madagascar, a French colony off the south eastern coast of Africa.[11] According to Himmler, on 25 May, "The Führer read the six pages (of the plan) through and found them very good and correct…"[12] Despite his strong threats, Hitler again revealed he was a realist. And, as Browning observes,

> This episode is of singular importance in that it is the only firsthand account by a high-ranking participant—Himmler—of just how a Hitler decision was reached and a *Führerbefehl*, or Hitler order, was given in respect to Nazi racial policy during this period. The initiative came from Himmler. However, he did not present Hitler with a precise plan; it was rather a statement of intent, a set of policy objectives. The details of implementation would be left to Himmler. Hitler indicated both his enthusiastic agreement and the men with whom the information could be shared […] He simply allowed it to be known what he wanted or approved.[13]

Kershaw agrees: When it came to the Jews, Hitler set a "vicious tone" then sanctioned and legitimated what he sensed were his underling's best—most realistically achievable—initiatives.[14] However, access to Madagascar required naval dominance over Britain, something the Germans never achieved. Consequently, the Madagascar Plan was shelved pending a victory that never arrived. The Madagascar Plan might then have been the most realistic option, but as this solution stalled, Hitler went on to drop hints of his openness to supporting any solution, no matter how radical:

Typical of Hitler's stance was his wish, expressed towards the end of 1940, that his Gauleiter in the East should be accorded the 'necessary freedom of movement', to accomplish their difficult task, that he would demand from his Gauleiter *after 10 years* only the single announcement that their territories were purely German, and would not enquire about the methods used to bring this about.[15]

The message was clear: Most important for Hitler was that the Jewish problem be solved; he did not care how they got there.

One benefit stemming from the Nazi's spate of military victories was that instead of funding their wars by shouldering more national debts or leveling unpopular taxes on the German public, they started financing subsequent military campaigns by plundering the economies of those they conquered.[16] Consider, for example, France, who through increasing occupation fees ended up paying the Nazis about 900 billion francs[17]—money then invested into Hitler's plans for eastern expansion. But why did so many Germans support these acts of state larceny? There are probably several overlapping reasons. First, the Nazi regime made sure that every class of German both at home and abroad personally benefited from Hitler's military ambitions. For example, the Nazis used some of the occupation fees to increase their soldiers' wages.[18] With more money in their pockets, the soldiers were then encouraged by both the regime and their families to purchase consumer items from the occupied territories and—to the detriment of the local economies and food supply—send their purchases back home. Herein lies the reason why between 1939 and 1945 Germany enjoyed the highest standard of living of any European nation in the war.[19] As we shall see, this other form of Nazi welfare only drew the average German—who Aly describes as a "well-fed parasite…"[20]—a little further into turning a blind eye to some of the regime's subsequent and even more unethical criminal ventures. A second reason for supporting the Nazi's illegal occupation practices was that the soldiers' purchases were preserved by a facade of legality: The men did (at least initially) not steal but *paid* for all their consumer items.[21] This, however, did not stop some Germans from sensing an injustice in their rising purchasing power. Consider, for example, the famous postwar writer and then Wehrmacht conscript Heinrich Böll who, despite the legal veneer surrounding his purchases, detected something unethical in his shopping sprees. In a letter dated September 1940 to his family back in Germany, Böll conceded:

The store shelves will of course now be emptied by soldiers…. I have reservations about joining in the stockpiling; although everything is paid for, it reminds me of robbing a corpse.[22]

But it was Hitler who, a few months into the start of World War Two, perhaps best expressed a third reason why so many Germans repeatedly backed the Nazi's ever-descending ethical bar: "No one will ask questions, once we've achieved victory."[23] In other words, as Nazi power rose with each victory, Germans everywhere sensed—much like every compliant link across the Obedience studies—they could unethically participate in and personally benefit from the wider organizational system with probable impunity.

Spurred on by Germany's initial military success, as early as 31 July 1940 Hitler started seriously contemplating an attack on the Soviet Union.[24] If indeed Hitler pursued this invasion, perhaps a territorial solution to the Jewish question could be found somewhere in the vast hinterlands of the Soviet Union. Around this time, the "Jewish question," however, was put aside in favor of tasks that demanded more immediate attention, such as the extraction of economic resources from the recently conquered Polish territories. One such venture involved an initially inconspicuous set of ex-army barracks near the Polish city of Krakow, which, during the spring of 1940, had been converted into a prison for German criminals and recalcitrant Poles.[25] The Germans called the prison Auschwitz.

The strategic importance of what became known as Auschwitz I to the Nazi regime increased significantly after September 1940 when Oswald Pohl (Chief of the SS Main Administration and Economic Office) discerned in the surrounding area immense economic potential.[26] Pohl's assessment was independently confirmed when officials from the German corporation IG Farben expressed an interest in the region's natural resources, centrally located railway junction, accompanying Nazi tax exemptions and, of course, access to cut-rate prison labor. On the downside, however, the area lacked any basic infrastructure.

On 1 March 1941, Himmler toured Auschwitz I with some IG Farben officials. To attract corporate investment, he promised to greatly increase the size of the fledgling camp's manual labor pool. Himmler ordered an expansion of Auschwitz I's capacity to 30,000 and the construction of a massive satellite camp nearby capable of holding 100,000 laborers.[27] Himmler informed IG Farben officials that the

laborers—drawn from the local Jewish and non-Jewish populations—would be tasked with building whatever infrastructure they desired. Himmler also likely had in mind a different and far more efficient source of slave labor. Even before he visited Auschwitz I, Himmler knew of Hitler's secret intention in the coming months to invade the Soviet Union. The anticipated swift victory would mean a sudden flood of Soviet POWs. Soviet POWs were a much more attractive source of slave labor than the local Polish population, because nearly all would be strong young men capable of arduous labor, whereas many Poles would come with families, including the young and old who would require housing and feeding for nothing in return.[28]

The "Twisted Road" to "Realizing the Unthinkable"

Between the end of 1939 and mid-1941, as realist Nazi bureaucrats debated where to send Jews and other conquered peoples, events of central importance to the subsequent attempt to exterminate European Jewry took place elsewhere. Ordinary and arguably only moderately antisemitic Germans, who, according to Hilberg, came from a "remarkable cross-section of the German population,"[29] began demonstrating an uncanny ability to eliminate fairly large numbers of defenseless civilians using what became by the war's end the three most common killing methods: shooting, starvation, and gassing.

Shooting

During the invasion of Poland, as partisans did their best to resist the Nazi attack, the Wehrmacht were faced with orders to execute civilians—either those caught resisting or hostages taken in place of those still at large. A death sentence also awaited those on Heydrich's list of anti-German agitators. To kill all of these civilians, execution squad commanders employed the only method of killing unarmed people they knew—death by military-style firing squad. Victims were shot facing the shooting squad, separated by ten or so meters. For photographic evidence of these early military-style executions (September and October 1939), see https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/facing-death-six-polish-civilians-1939/ and https://www.ushmm.org/collections/the-museums-collections/collections-highlights/german-invasion-of-poland-75-years-later/from-the-museums-collections/execution-of-piotr-sosnowski.

As discussed in Volume 1, firearms render killing psychologically easier for perpetrators than when using weapons like the bayonet. Guns make killing relatively easier for the same reason these weapons tend to reduce the pleasure sexually motivated serial killers experience when killing: Firearms ensure the deathblow/s to victims need not be felt thus reducing the displeasure that more ordinary (typically squeamish) people would otherwise experience if they tried to kill with more tactile means. As Levin and Fox observe:

> Among serial murders that are sexually inspired, the use of a gun is, in fact, remarkably rare. For those killers, physical contact is so crucial to satisfying their murderous sexual impulses that a gun robs them of the pleasure they receive from killing with their hands.[30]

Firearms also make killing physically easier, because, compared to other closer-range weapons and methods, they generate the force behind the lethal blow. In sum, firearms are comparatively more lethal than other more common tactile weapons or methods of homicide, because, as Egger and Peters succinctly put it, "a gun requires considerably less proximity, strength, agility, skill and squeamishness, and offers less opportunity for self-defence…"[31] Furthermore, it should be remembered that as mass shootings in US educational institutions repeatedly illustrate, when it comes to raw power, concealability, and rapid fire, not all guns are equal.

Having said all this, firearms might make killing easier, but they do not make killing easy. Shooters are still likely to experience high levels of visual and perhaps even auditory perceptual stimulation—they directly see and hear the destructive consequences of pulling the trigger. In fact, as the number of Polish hostages increased—with three or even up to ten Poles executed for every German life lost[32]—some execution squad members started experiencing what Lieutenant General Max Bock described as "vast agitation and powerful emotional stress…"[33] Stress increased when shooting certain types of civilians—executing children was deemed a particularly repugnant task.[34] During these early executions, victims collapsed where they were shot (as shown in both the above links to photographs). Afterward, if nobody else could be found, the squad members had to dig graves to dispose of the bodies. Doing so meant that the shooters then had to directly confront the horrific human consequences of their actions. According to Grossman, confronting a person one has just killed significantly accentuates the initial trauma, "since some of the psychological buffer created by a midrange kill disappears upon seeing the victim at close range."[35]

Although the German armed forces encountered some psychological difficulties when killing Poles in this way, they nevertheless managed to shoot approximately 16,000 civilians—about 5000 of whom were Jewish.[36] Also, after the Poles conceded defeat, in the last months of 1939 the SS forces and ethnic German auxiliaries shot up to 50,000 members of the Polish intelligentsia and other civilian resisters (7000 of whom were Jewish).[37]

Starvation

Independent of Nazi officials in Berlin, local German authorities in the two largest Polish ghettos at Lódź (Incorporated Territory) and Warsaw (General Government)—which between them contained about one-third of all Polish Jews under Nazi control[38]—decided at different times and for different reasons to seal off their ghettos from the adjacent non-Jewish communities.[39] Cut off from outside help, the poorest Jewish prisoners began to perish from starvation and associated diseases. The destructive effects of these policies were first observed in the Lódź ghetto, which, with 163,177 Jews[40] crammed into a 2.6-square kilometer sector of the wider city,[41] was sealed in April 1940. That summer Governor Greiser reported that from the "point of view of nutrition and the control of epidemics" life in the Lódź ghetto had already become untenable.[42] Between June 1940 and the end of January 1941, more than 7000 Jews died in the Lódź ghetto.[43]

Alexander Palfinger, a German ghetto administrator, seized upon this catastrophe as a partial solution to the escalating "Jewish problem." As far as he was concerned, "A rapid dying out of the Jews is for us a matter of total indifference, if not to say desirable." According to Palfinger's interpretation of Nazi ideology, such an outcome was consistent with what he anticipated would become the regime's "radical course," because in relation to the "Jewish question the National Socialist idea…permits no compromise…"[44] Palfinger thus provides another example of Carl Friedrich's rule of anticipated reactions (i.e., guessing what one's superior probably desires) or Browning's "seizing the initiative from below…"

Browning calls German ghetto administrators like Palfinger, who believed the Jews should be starved, "attritionists."[45] Opposed to attritionists were another group of administrators termed "productionists," who believed that sources of labor should not be wasted, and that making the Jews work would not only financially benefit Germany, but also enable Jews to obtain food at no cost to the Reich, thus averting any risk of starvation. This self-sustaining policy could be maintained until Berlin

decided where to send these Jews. As Palfinger's immediate superior, Hans Biebow (Lódź's chief ghetto administrator), argued on 18 October 1940, "everything must be done to make the ghetto self-sustaining."[46] Biebow and his superior, Dr. Karl Marder (the deputy mayor of Lódź), set up a ghetto economy, indicating that in Lódź the "productionists" were in control and Palfinger was ignored.[47]

The discontented Palfinger soon transferred to the Warsaw ghetto, where by March 1941 nearly half a million Jews had been squeezed into just over three square kilometers of space.[48] There he met like-minded "attritionists" Waldemar Schön and Karl Naumann, and together they generated conditions that promoted what Schön euphemistically termed "premature impoverishment…"[49] But again Palfinger's intentions were subordinated to those of Warsaw's own "productionists" who dominated among the local German authorities. At a meeting on 3 April 1941, Walter Emmerich argued, "*The starting point for all economic measures had to be the idea of maintaining the capacity of the Jews to live*" [italics original].[50] Thus, on 19 April 1941 a new "productionist" policy was introduced in Warsaw. Schön was replaced by Max Bischof who was told that if Palfinger caused any further problems he could have him removed. Palfinger stopped trying to anticipate Hitler's desires and, having narrowly avoided dismissal, by early May 1941 informed a surprised Adam Czerniaków (the Jewish council chairman that helped manage the ghetto), "that he will do everything to improve the food supply."[51]

Despite all this, because the Nazi regime struggled to meet the generous basic food requirements of its civilian population,[52] being unable to always accommodate the needs of those at the top of their racial hierarchy meant that grueling times indeed lay ahead for the Jews at the bottom, irrespective of how hard they were willing to work. As Göring said, "If someone has to go hungry, it won't be the Germans…"[53] In the end, promises of more food were made to the Jews in the Polish ghettos, but, as Biebow pointed out in January 1941, little arrived because it was continually "withdrawn for allegedly more urgent needs."[54] People in the ghetto population received about 220 calories per day, which is about 15% of normal dietary requirements.[55]

During April and May 1941, a famine of endemic proportions took hold of the Warsaw ghetto killing 6000 Jews.[56] Nevertheless, German administrators ("productionists" and "attritionists" alike) followed directives from Berlin that the Jews were not to leave the ghetto in search of food.[57] These administrators were able to tolerate the deaths that resulted with relative psychological ease because, for reasons discussed in

Volume 1, starvation as a method of killing causes little affective stimulation. None of the Germans involved—from those who rounded up and delivered victims to the ghettos, to the administrators, and the guards who prevented their escape—had to touch, see, or hear victims in their death throes. Excluding guards who frequently shot escapees, none of the perpetrators had to actually kill Jews. Instead, the German authorities were able to pass responsibility to a reified "Berlin" for imposing such deadly conditions. They did not perceive themselves as the most responsible for the deaths. This strain resolving displacement of responsibility was made possible by the division of labor inherent within the ghetto administration's bureaucracy, which helped ease the perpetrators' psychological burden of death.

Being in positions of power, most Germans involved could, if they so chose, deploy Obedience study-like avoidance techniques to circumvent the perceptual reality of those slowly dying in the ghettos. Consider, for example, Claude Lanzmann's conversation with Deputy Commissioner of the Warsaw ghetto, Franz Grassler: "*Did you go into the ghetto?* Seldom. When I had to visit Czerniaków. *What were the conditions like?* Awful. Yes, appalling. I never went back when I saw what it was like. Unless I had to. In the whole period I think I only went once or twice."[58] The reason Grassler rarely had to enter the ghetto was because the Nazis formed Jewish councils—the so-called Judenrat—and tasked them with organizing the day-to-day management and policing of the ghettos. Here, the Nazis deployed "the tried-and-tested colonial" technique "of indirect rule through favored natives who got privileges…in exchange for helping control everyone else."[59] As we shall see, throughout World War Two the Nazis repeatedly relied on this divide and rule management technique. The Nazis did so because not only it more efficiently minimized German labor, but also it spread complicity for any harmful outcomes onto the Jewish leadership. As one German official in Warsaw noted, during periods of extreme hardship the ghetto inhabitants would rather conveniently "direct their resentment against the Jewish administrations and not against the German supervisors."[60] And when the Nazi overlords did have to enter the ghettos, the desperate and corrupting conditions endured by the starving population only served to reinforce the former's prejudicial stereotypes of the Ostjuden (Eastern Jew). These distraught and starved people often looked and sometimes even behaved just like the parasitic and threatening criminals the Nazis assumed them to be.[61]

Gassing

As early as July 1933, the Nazi regime passed the Weimar Republic's Law for the Prevention of Genetically Damaged Offspring, after which somewhere between 200,000 and 350,000 Germans were sterilized.[62] However, several years later in October 1939, congruent with Nazi ideology, Hitler produced the following secret document,

> Berlin, 1 Sept. 1939
>
> Reich Leader Bouhler and Dr. med. Brandt are charged with the responsibility of enlarging the competence of certain physicians, designated by name, so that patients who, on the basis of human judgment, are considered incurable, can be granted mercy death after a discerning diagnosis.
>
> (signed) A. Hitler[63]

This document, which Hitler backdated to the start of the war, authorized what the Nazi's euphemistically termed the euthanasia program: the extermination of people with physical and mental disabilities. Hitler signed the document because chancellery officials informed him that the physicians approached to implement this policy would likely require an assurance from the state that they would not be held criminally liable for their harmful actions.[64] That is, Hitler's advisors anticipated that those most directly involved would need to know that they could kill with impunity. Much like Milgram's decision to insert the strain resolving "Waver [*sic*] of responsibility" into his emerging procedure (see Volume 1),[65] the chancellery officials also anticipated that their subordinate harm inflictors, fearing someone might later question them about their decision to hurt others, needed to feel they were sufficiently covered.

For several reasons, this is an important document. First, it illustrates that when Hitler suspected a policy of exterminating "subhumans" had a *realistic* chance of successful implementation, the *strong believer* in him was willing to pursue it. Second, his backdating of this document to the same date he instructed his Death's Head Units to start killing "all" members of the "Polish race" and when he threatened to start annihilating "the Jewish race in Europe" triangulates when in earnest Hitler intended to convert Nazi ideology into a reality. It was from 1 September 1939 that he wanted to start killing *all* "subhumans."[66] The problem for Hitler was that his subordinates were not yet willing or capable of converting his intentions into a reality. Nevertheless, this

document irrefutably connects Hitler to, and establishes him as, the leading instigator of Nazi genocidal ambitions, which (in conflict with his usual modus operandi) captures his direct top-down orders to kill.

Clearly, however, Hitler had confidence in the ability of Philipp Bouhler (from the private chancellery) and Karl Brandt (Hitler's private doctor) to set up an organization capable of converting his desire into a reality. In all likelihood, this confidence traces back to the fact that such killings would target a particularly powerless group segregated from wider society in secretive institutions. Furthermore, political resistance to this policy was unlikely because the wider German public would be distracted by the natural distress of a nation at war.

Bouhler and Brandt soon formed an organization called Tiergartenstraße 4 (T4). The organization started experimenting with different killing techniques, including lethal injection, which Brandt suspected T4 staff might willingly use on patients. However, he later concluded that this method was insufficiently "humane."[67] Trial-and-error exploration confirmed that lethal injection was too slow and unreliable.[68] It surely didn't help that this method of killing necessitated a physical connection between the injector (cause) and injected (effect), especially when patients died slow and presumably painful deaths. Then, Viktor Brack from Hitler's private chancellery, in conjunction with chemist Albert Widmann, suggested diverting pure bottled carbon monoxide gas into a hermetically sealed room,[69] intuiting that this was a method the T4 staff might use. Put differently, when compared to lethal injection, Brack and Widmann suspected the more "humane" method of gassing might better ensure the act of killing would remain within the T4 staff's *Zone of Indifference*—a task that, without reservation, they would willingly partake. This method of killing was trailed soon after the start of the war when the tentacles of the euthanasia program reached across Germany's border and into the annexed Polish territories.[70]

More specifically, in Poland Brandt helped set up the Lange Commando, headed by Herbert Lange, a "no-nonsense" fanatical Nazi.[71] The 15-man strong commando was based in Fort VII, a recently established Gestapo prison located in Poznań (in Greiser's Wartheland province in the former Poland).[72] Around October or November 1939, the T4 chemist August Becker arrived at Fort VII armed with cylinders of carbon monoxide. Becker was there to provide Lange with "technical assistance" in pursuit of an experimental killing operation.[73] The Lange Commando locked a group of psychiatric patients in a prison cell that

had rather hastily been hermetically sealed with clay.[74] Carbon monoxide was then pumped into the cell, killing the patients. Throughout December, Lange and his men used this killing technique to exterminate patients from the surrounding area. They also instructed prisoners from Fort VII—non-Jewish Poles accused of partisan activity—to empty the cell and, in a nearby forest, bury the victims' bodies.[75] After some reflection, Lange deemed collecting and then killing patients at Fort VII inefficient and soon after instructed his Polish prisoner work detail to help convert a truck with a large cargo cabin into a mobile gas chamber.[76] Despite accounts that Lange had two or more of these early-model gas vans, Patrick Montague is confident that only one such truck existed.[77] Canisters of pure carbon monoxide were attached to the driver's compartment. From January 1940, this truck was observed being driven to victims located at various institutions throughout the Wartheland.[78] Once patients were locked in the cargo cabin, gas was released by opening valves located in the driver's cabin. Again, Lange's prison work detail was instructed to dispose of the victims' bodies in a nearby forest. Using Polish workers for such tasks obviously enabled Lange's men to avoid having to touch the recently killed victims.

Perhaps inspired by Lange's efforts, back in Germany around January 1940 a team of T4 officials were invited to Brandenburg-Havel prison to observe a demonstration. Twenty institutionalized men were locked in a cell[79] and according to Becker, having recently returned from his trip to Fort VII, the cell was,

> a tiled shower room, measuring about three meters by five, and three meters high. On the periphery were benches, and along the wall, at about ten centimeters from the ground, a gas main about an inch in diameter passed. This pipe was pierced with little holes out of which the carbon monoxide came.[80]

A physician controlled a lever on the gas canister. After about twenty minutes, asphyxia set in followed by death.[81] At least seventeen T4 officials observed this demonstration—including Brandt, Brack, Widmann, Philipp Bouhler, Christian Wirth, Irmfried Ebel, and August Becker—all of whom went on to play central roles in the extermination of Jews.[82] They deemed the demonstration so "successful" that having discovered what they suspected was the "one best way" to achieving Hitler's goal of exterminating people with disabilities, the euthanasia gassing

program was initiated in Germany. Five permanent gas chambers were set up at various institutions throughout Germany, including Grafeneck, Bernburg, Hadamar, Hartheim, and Sonnenstein. These institutions tended to have benign, strain resolving names such as *The Charitable Foundation for Institutional Care* and *The Reich Work Cooperative for Institutional Care*.[83]

Throughout the Wartheland between January and April 1940, Lange's roaming unit continued killing Poles with disabilities.[84] The commando proved so effective that in May they were seconded to an East Prussian hospital (a few hundred kilometers north) where, across a mere two-week period, they gassed 1558 patients.[85] Somewhat mysteriously, between 8 June 1940 and 3 June 1941 the Lange Commando ceased killing Poles with disabilities.[86] Nonetheless, in terms of the broader picture, between the end of 1939 and the summer of 1941, T4 gassed at least 80,000 Germans[87] and thousands of Poles with disabilities.[88] This gassing technique generated little strain, trauma, or repugnance on the perpetrators who neither had to touch, see, nor hear their victims die. In fact, should they have desired it, gassing offered the killers the option of total perceptual avoidance.

The Transformation of Himmler and Heydrich

Since early in 1939 when Heydrich had been charged with settling Germany's "Jewish problem," Himmler, his superior, fretted over the SS's repeated failure to resolve this issue. This concern came to a head in January 1941, when Himmler appealed directly to Heydrich for a solution to the problem of population exchange in the East between Jews, Christian Poles, and ethnic Germans.[89] There was no obvious place yet available to send the Poles. Around this point in time, however, I would argue that Himmler and Heydrich underwent a gradual transformation. That is, across the period that their own more "realistic" policy of emigration faltered, moderately antisemitic Germans demonstrated an uncanny ability to eliminate fairly large numbers of defenseless civilians. It did not take long for Himmler and Heydrich to sense potential in previously rejected ideas of the "strong believers."

The emergence of this transformation perhaps traces back to the summer of 1940 when Himmler confirmed his "realist" status when he said, "'out of inner conviction,' he still rejected 'the physical extermination of a race through Bolshevik methods…[because they were] un-Germanic

and impracticable.'"[90] In other words, it was beneath the dignity of Germans to engage in acts of mass killing. Simultaneously, Heydrich parroted the same argument.[91] And in any case, because such ideas were considered "impracticable," they were ruled out from further discussion. However, as Himmler implied, if extermination suddenly became feasible, he might be willing to reconsider.

So, it is clear that much like their Führer, Himmler and Heydrich only favored emigration over more radical "strong believer" measures because the former seemed more "realistic." Thus, for "realists" like Hitler, Himmler, and Heydrich, the desire to exterminate "inferiors" had always been present[92]—keeping in mind that their preference to cram Jews into cargo ships and deport them to Madagascar's harsh tropical environment (perhaps governed by T4's Philipp Bouhler)[93] was, in itself, inherently genocidal.[94] However, before 1941 a realistic means of achieving large-scale extermination did not exist. Hitler may have repeatedly hinted at his "wish" that the Jews be exterminated, but before 1941 all signals indicated that converting such a desire into reality was probably impossible.[95] The impracticality of a "Final Solution" before 1941 helps to explain why there was no planning for genocide before then.[96]

But as the previously unrealistic ideas of the "strong believers" began showing greater potential than their own stalled "realist" strategies, both Himmler and Heydrich started contemplating ways of applying "strong believer" solutions to local manifestations of the "Jewish problem." For example, sometime after October or November of 1940, the Chief SS physician, Ernst Grawitz, claimed that Heydrich asked him to boost the death rate in the Warsaw ghetto by triggering an epidemic.[97] More certainly, a few months later Himmler contemplated using the T4 euthanasia gassing technique in his over-crowded concentration camps. In a discussion in early 1941 between Himmler and Bouhler about prisoners no longer capable of productive labor, the SS-Reichsführer wondered, "whether and how the personnel and the facilities of T4 can be utilized for the concentration camps."[98]

> Early in 1941, T4 leader Bouhler agreed to let Himmler use T4 personnel and facilities to rid the camps of 'excess' prisoners – notably those 'most seriously ill,' physically and mentally. Sometimes called 'prisoner euthanasia' or (by prisoners) 'Operation Invalid,' the resultant program was officially 'Operation [or Special Treatment] 14f13.'[99]

The 14f13 killing program started in April 1941[100] and was soon after extended to the recently built concentration camps in the East. By the end of May[101] or July[102] of 1941, ex-T4 personnel working in Operation 14f13 had arrived in the hinterlands of Poland, in places like Auschwitz I. In a related operation, 575 men from Auschwitz I who "were all worn out"[103] were selected and transported by train to a T4 gas chamber hundreds of miles away at Sonnenstein in Germany.[104] German camp officials determined that these men could not be killed at Auschwitz I without causing a commotion.[105] By the end of the war, Operation 14f13 had killed nearly 20,000 people.[106]

Himmler and Heydrich, of course, were not the only ones to sense potential in the ideas of the strong believers. Consider, for example, Rudolf Gater, a rationalization expert, who independently saw merit in ghetto administrator Palfinger's intuition when in March of 1941 he argued that, "conditions of undernourishment" in the Polish ghettos "could be allowed to develop without regard for the consequences."[107] Also, on 16 July 1941 SS-Sturmbannführer Rolf-Heinz Höppner wrote in a letter to Eichmann,

> This winter [in the Wartheland] there is a danger that it will not be possible to feed all the Jews. It should therefore seriously be considered whether the most humane solution would not be to eliminate those Jews unfit for work by some fast-working method. That would in any case be more agreeable than leaving them to die of starvation.[108]

He concluded, "These things sound somewhat fantastic but are in my opinion definitely feasible."[109] Curiously, during the four-week period before Höppner wrote this letter, the Lange Commando had resumed, after their 12-month hiatus, exterminating Wartheland Poles with disabilities.[110] Perhaps Höppner was cognizant of Lange's activities (both were based in Poznań),[111] and maybe this explains why, with respect to the Jews, he had euthanasia gassing technology in mind.[112] However, Himmler, who two months earlier had sent hundreds of Auschwitz's prisoners by train to be gassed in Germany, had already discovered that installing the T4 killing technology in the Eastern territories was actually impracticable. It was impracticable because gassing required cylinders of pure carbon monoxide which were expensive to produce, difficult to transport out of Germany, and the quantities required to kill such large numbers of civilians simply did not exist.[113] If gassing was ever to

be relied upon in the East, all of these obstacles would have to be over-come. As Hilberg argued,

> We are dealing not with a sudden decision but with the emergence of an idea. […] the idea of killing the Jews had now matured. As a plan for administrative action, the idea was not yet obvious or even feasible; but as a thought of something that could happen.[114]

But only those in direct control of the machinery of destruction—Himmler, "a genius for organization"[115] and the "Architect of Genocide,"[116] and Heydrich, "the real engineer" (as Gerald Reitinger called him[117])—were in sufficiently powerful positions to convert such ideas into reality.[118] As both the "Realization of the Unthinkable"[119] simmered and Hitler started unveiling his intentions to invade the Soviet Union, "Murder" as Browning observes "was in the air…"[120]

Hitler and the Invasion of the Soviet Union

With a handful of successful military campaigns and most of Western Europe under his belt in December 1940, a Hitler brimming with confidence finalized his plans to attack the Soviet Union. Termed Operation Barbarossa, the campaign was to start the following summer.[121] Like the invasion of Poland, Operation Barbarossa would be a two-pronged assault. The Wehrmacht would lead the way, deploying its trademark Blitzkrieg tactics. Himmler's men would follow in the German military's wake and secure the captured territory. Again, the Nazi leadership suspected that Russia's so-called Jewish-Bolshevik intelligentsia would encourage common folk to resist German forces, and so on 13 March 1941, Hitler tasked Himmler's SS with the elimination of these leaders.[122] On 26 March, Eduard Wagner (the Quartermaster General of the Wehrmacht High Command) and Himmler agreed with this general plan.[123] A few days later on 30 March, Hitler informed a couple of hundred commanding officers that during Operation Barbarossa they were not to rely on traditional military customs. Instead, this was a,

> Clash between two ideologies… *Bolshevism equals a social criminality.* Communism [is a] tremendous danger for the future. We must get away from the standpoint of soldierly comradeship. The Communist is no comrade, either before or after. *It is a war of extermination* […] The troops

must defend themselves with the methods with which they are attacked. *Commissars and secret service personnel are criminals and must be treated as such.* [italics added][124]

If one reads a little between the lines here, because the Nazis closely associated Jews with Bolshevism, here Hitler was socially constructing the Jews—or at least the (apparent) Jewish Soviet leadership—into a population of criminals. And because, according to the dictates of Nazi ideology, Jews are genetically immutable, the only infallible and permanent means of eliminating this omnipotent crime problem was that it be exterminated. Hitler urging his commanders to exterminate Bolshevist Jews may sound like an extremely radical request, but it should be kept in mind that before unification, Germany's many states had long histories of killing those deemed by rule-making legislators to be "dangerous criminals." Interestingly, just over a year earlier in the November 1938 edition of *Das Schwarze Korps*, Heydrich explicitly captured what I suspect was the Führer's attempt at framing all Jews as "criminals…" On top of this, the SS-Obergruppenführer also makes the normative connection to what Germans had historically done with such people.

The German people are not in the least inclined to tolerate in their country hundreds of thousands of criminals, who not only secure their existence through crime, but also want to exact revenge. […] These hundreds of thousands of impoverished Jews [would create] a breeding ground for Bolshevism and a collection of the politically criminal subhuman elements. […] In such a situation we would be faced with the hard necessity of exterminating the Jewish underworld in the same way as, under our government of law and order, we are accustomed to exterminating any other criminals – that is, by fire and sword. The result would be the actual and final end of Jewry in Germany, its absolute annihilation.[125]

Again, Bolshevists were Jews, Jews were criminals, and, as long practiced throughout German history, it was quite normal for the government to execute those deemed by rule makers to be dangerous criminals. For many Germans in the armed forces, this was just the kind of reasoning that helped personally legitimize their killing of a large category of other human beings.

Putting aside the Nazi's gradual social construction of Jews into "criminals," it was Hitler's suspicion that a successful invasion of the Soviet Union would have many benefits for Germany. It would surely force

Britain to concede defeat. If not, however, the Nazis would gain access to the fertile Ukrainian breadbasket, thus circumventing the effectiveness of any Allied blockade of the German civilian population, such as had occurred during World War One.[126] The Nazis might also gain access to the Caucasus oil fields, the largest in Europe.[127] And finally, a Soviet defeat might discourage the Americans from entering the war. Tainting any such anticipated victory, however, were the four or perhaps five million Jews living within the Soviet Union's post-August 1939 borders.[128] Himmler and Heydrich, charged with resolving the Jewish problem, would have been particularly sensitive to this drawback. Then again, a successful conquest of Russia might (with the British Navy presumably out of the way) revive the Madagascar Plan as a potential solution to the "Jewish Question," and if not, the massive Soviet interior included several new possible expulsion sites (presumably viewed to be German colonial penal colonies), including the Ukrainian marshlands or even the Siberian wastelands.[129]

In preparation for eliminating the Soviet intelligentsia, about 3000 rank and file men drawn from the SS, SD, the Gestapo, Sipo, Waffen SS forces, as well as the less politicized State Police, Reserve Police Battalions, and also some civilian draftees were recruited for special training in May 1941.[130] The men were divided into four groups: Einsatzgruppe A, B, C, and D. These four groups were further subdivided into units called Einsatzkommandos (50–175 men each), and further again into Sonderkommandos.[131] Also, a month earlier, around mid-April, Himmler instructed Police Battalion 322, and probably other police units, to prepare for operations outside of Germany.[132]

One interpretation of the Nazi regime's attack on the Soviet Union is that just before the start of the campaign, Himmler and Heydrich were so concerned about their ever-expanding "Jewish problem" that they subtly conveyed their ultimate desire to the commanders tasked with executing the "Jewish-Bolshevik intelligentsia" that they wanted their execution squads to exterminate every Jewish man, woman, and child encountered. As Breitman notes: "One reading of the events is that the Einsatzgruppen commanders already knew the final goal of Nazi Jewish policy and were given some discretion to accomplish as much as they could with limited manpower."[133] This is not to suggest that before the start of the invasion execution squad commanders were given direct orders to exterminate Soviet Jewry (a controversial issue termed the Krausnick versus Streim debate),[134] but rather that the commanders of the execution squads had a "vague notion"[135] of what Himmler and

Heydrich desired of them: They were to exterminate as many Jews as they possibly could.

The main reason I suspect there were no direct orders instructing all Jews to be killed is that before the campaign both Himmler and Heydrich were not sure their men would be willing and/or capable of fulfilling such orders. As Jürgen Matthäus puts it, "Before the unleashing of Operation Barbarossa, the German leadership could not be certain that its political will would be carried out in the field."[136] Much of the SS leadership's skepticism came from the earlier Polish campaign during which German armed forces were ordered to shoot civilians. Although the Germans killed tens of thousands, they frequently experienced "vast agitation and powerful emotional stress" from doing so. Himmler's awareness of these psychological problems was so acute that in June 1940 he employed and promoted the brutal World War One veteran Oskar Dirlewanger (also a convicted pedophile) and supplied him with a battalion of ex-convict poachers—killing specialists—for the kinds of human shooting assignments that Himmler suspected most Germans would shy away from.[137] But the task of eliminating just the Russian intelligentsia was so great that Himmler and Heydrich needed to rely on more numerous categories of Germans from the SS, Order Police, and Wehrmacht.

On the other hand, Himmler and Heydrich may have had reason to suspect that their ordinary men *might* be willing and capable of killing every Soviet Jew encountered given the right circumstances. During the Polish campaign, some members of the execution squads proved themselves entirely capable of regularly shooting defenseless men[138]—a difficult task some perceived as a measure of manliness.[139] This time the victims would not be somewhat similar-looking Poles, but Soviet Jews, people who were ethnically, culturally, and economically significantly different from the Germans who filled Himmler's ranks. Furthermore, Soviet Jews embodied the two main targets of nearly a decade of Nazi propaganda—the threat of "Jewish Bolshevism." On top of this, with some of his men having willingly executed many Poles accused of partisan resistance, it is perhaps of little surprise that with increasing intensity after the Polish invasion, Himmler liked to remind his men that "Where there are partisans…there are Jews, and where there are Jews, there are partisans."[140] Because Himmler later came to believe that the word "partisan" tended to glamorize Bolshevism, in a special order he

then requested the application of this word be replaced with "bandits," "franc-tireurs," and—in line with Hitler's own term—"criminals…"[141]

Importantly, because during the lead-up to the Soviet invasion the Nazi regime had socially constructed Jews to be both "partisans" and "criminals," Himmler and Heydrich likely suspected that the killing of all Jews—unlike during the start of the Polish campaign—might have been within the German armed force's *Zone of Indifference*. More specifically, because the role of soldiers and police officers occasionally involves killing "criminals" and "partisans" (respectively), the annihilation of all Jews was now a task that, with less reservation, they might—if psychologically capable—willingly partake. And even if armed Germans proved psychologically incapable of killing all Jewish civilians in the East, perhaps more fiercely antisemitic Eastern European collaborators might do the job.

Whether German or Eastern European executioners succeeded or not in killing every Jewish person encountered, the end result would still be fewer Jews contributing to Himmler and Heydrich's escalating "Jewish problem."[142] If their subtle plans resulted in a technically feasible solution, they could then invest far more resources into it. And if the plan failed dismally, and all available forces flatly refused to participate in something as unethical and unlawful as genocide, the SS leadership—including Hitler—could plausibly deny the existence of any such order (perhaps explaining why no direct orders to kill *all* Jews before the Soviet invasion have ever been found).[143] It will be recalled that just before the Polish invasion Hitler had boasted to his commanders of sending "my 'Death's Head Units' with the order to kill without pity or mercy all men, women, and children of Polish race or language." He must have felt a little embarrassed when they did no such thing, with some soldiers even suffering breakdowns when they tried to kill Polish civilians *en masse*. And perhaps it was here that a red-faced Hitler learned from his presumptuousness. As Henry Friedlander observed,

> although Hitler believed that the cover of war would make radical exclusion through killing operations possible – which he emphasized by backdating his euthanasia authorization to the day the war began – he nevertheless did not issue a definite order [regarding the "Jewish problem"] until he was certain that such an ambitious killing enterprise was feasible.[144]

Again, before Hitler would back a "strong believer" solution, such a solution had to be "realistic."[145] And even if Himmler and Heydrich failed, because they left the door of plausible deniability wide open, they could evade the embarrassment that usually, when among their Nazi peers, accompanies such failure and simply move on to test some other more "realistic" strategy. And the Nazi leadership did have a history of issuing vague orders necessitating subordinate initiative, especially when those leaders wanted to retain the option of later denying responsibility for delivering those orders.[146] Because Himmler and Heydrich were confident that Germany would win the war and would soon be in total control of all of Europe, suspecting they could act with impunity, they likely believed themselves to have a free hand to dabble in genocide. Somewhat like Milgram, they suspected that from positions of power they could determine what was morally right and wrong. Quite simply, the SS leadership suspected they had an enormous amount to gain and little to lose in running their pilot study in genocide—what Konrad Kwiet terms a "testing ground for subsequent killings."[147]

Although Himmler and Heydrich were unsure if their men would kill every Jewish person they encountered, one variable they did control was their own actions. Having learned from their past experiences during the Polish campaign, from the top-down, they would do all they could to encourage, persuade, or, if necessary, coerce their men into doing what they ultimately desired.[148] For example, during training for their future tasks, members of the Einsatzgruppen and Order Police were exposed to a deluge of antisemitic propaganda.[149] Perhaps if the men had a strong ideological rationale for harming others, they might come to see the "necessity" of killing all Jews and associate the second part of their training schedule—shooting practice—as the means of achieving that end.[150]

Even though the rank and file was not selected on an individual basis, the same could not be said of their field commanders. Around mid-April 1941, Himmler started to personally select his Higher SS and Police leaders.[151] And in terms of the Einsatzgruppen, not only were these commanders handpicked on the basis of initiative and independence[152] but also nearly all of them possessed characteristics that reinforced the perception that they were credible and intellectual elites. As Müller-Hill observes, of the fifteen commanders in the Soviet interior between 1941 and 1943, six (40%) had doctoral degrees, and three others (20%) had studied law.[153] Furthermore, 16 of 69 (23%) Einsatzkommando leaders held doctoral degrees, with the remainder having at least studied

at university.[154] Officers were likely to have been educated at prestigious German or Austrian universities and often worked in the law profession.[155] This was no coincidence: If there was a threat that the lower ranks might baulk at the legalities of exterminating certain categories of civilians, the binding force of uncompromising ideologues whose expertize frequently lay in the law itself might mitigate this risk. If they were not lawyers, the field commanders typically came from other respected professions—the kind of high-status positions (like Dr. Milgram or Williams the Yale-based "scientist") a reluctant subordinate could conveniently place their faith in. Drawing on Müller-Hill's research, as Hilary Earl notes: "When a university professor, an economist, a priest, a doctor, or a lawyer order executions, 'they cannot be wrong…'"[156]

Despite carefully selecting the leadership class and then barraging the rank and file with ideological propaganda and training with weapons fairly low in perceptual stimulation, a few days before the launch of Operation Barbarossa, Heydrich expressed doubts about the willingness and/or capability of his men to shoot civilians. With the intention of passing off such dirty work to local populations, Browning argues that Heydrich stressed in a meeting with the Einsatzgruppen commanders in Berlin on 17 June that, "No obstacle was to be placed in the way of the 'self-cleansing efforts'…of anticommunist and anti-Jewish circles."[157] With respect to the German men's capacity to exterminate civilians, Matthäus argues the SS leader had a "fear of going too far too quickly," and (with a hint of the foot-in-the-door phenomenon) "instead of providing explicit orders for the rapid expansion of the killing process, the SS and police leadership in Berlin seems to have followed a course that can be described as controlled escalation."[158] According to Breitman, Himmler likewise believed "Once they [his men] had carried out mass murder in response to an alleged crime or provocation, it would be easier to get them to follow broader killing orders later."[159]

On the eve of the attack, the German armed forces issued the rank and file with the (purposefully ambiguous?) Commissar Order. The order stated, "This struggle demands ruthless and energetic measures against bolshevist agitators, guerrillas, saboteurs, Jews, and complete elimination of any active or passive resistance."[160] For groups such as the Einsatzgruppen, the Commissar Order was congruent with their *main* task: Much like during the Polish invasion, they were to secure the captured territory and kill any signs of national leadership. Having said that, with the help of their field commanders, it was up to the men

to interpret what "ruthless and energetic measures" against "Jews" engaging in "active or passive resistance" meant. Some would guess correctly and be rewarded. Others would fail (perhaps purposefully) to implement the SS leadership's desired course. For them, clearer hints—secondhand or, if necessary, personally delivered oral orders—would be needed. True to Hitler's usual management style, ambiguous orders left the door of "personal initiative" wide open.[161] With increasing clarity, time, and experience, the men in the field would be shouldered with resolving what, for the more ambitious among them, would become an intense competition to find the "one best way" of shooting civilians *en masse*.[162] With words somewhat reminiscent of Milgram's pilot studies, as Browning put it: "What they were being asked to accomplish was at the time totally unprecedented. At this stage every step was uncharted, every policy an experiment, every action a trial run."[163]

CONCLUSION

Between the end of 1939 and halfway through 1941, realist Nazi bureaucrats spent much time and energy debating where they could resettle an ever-increasing number of Jews and other conquered peoples. While at the same time, ordinary and arguably moderately antisemitic non-Jewish Germans[164] began demonstrating their ability to kill fairly large numbers of defenseless civilians using what became by the war's end the three common methods of shooting, starvation, and gassing. With the repeated failure of the apparently more "realistic" policy of emigration, the most powerful "realist" bureaucrats started to sense potential in the previously rejected ideas of the "strong believers." As the invasion of the Soviet Union approached, an excellent opportunity appeared to at least test the feasibility of this radical solution. But would their men shoot all Soviet Jews? As Breitman argues, Himmler, Heydrich, and Kurt Daluege (of the Order Police) "did not yet know how smoothly the killing process would work, which leaders and units would prove effective, and whether there would be significant resistance, including resistance from the policemen themselves."[165] Browning adds, "they did not know – indeed could not have known – if the plans they had been formulating would even work."[166] Time would certainly tell.

Notes

1. Rossino (2003, p. 13).
2. Rossino (2003, p. 65).
3. Rossino (2003, pp. 90, 117–118, 129–130).
4. Rossino (2003, pp. 117–118).
5. Rossino (2003, pp. 99–101, 120).
6. Rutherford (2007, p. 60).
7. Angrick and Klein (2009, pp. 176–177), Browning (2004, pp. 36–72), Cesarani (2004, pp. 82–83) and Rutherford (2007, pp. 63–132).
8. Browning (2004, pp. 40–42).
9. Quoted in Browning (2004, p. 26). See also Mommsen (1986, pp. 118–119).
10. Kershaw (2000, pp. 111–112) and Cesarani (2016, p. 262). See also Rutherford (2007, p. 117).
11. Browning (2004, pp. 81–82).
12. Quoted in Browning (2000, p. 14).
13. Quoted in Browning (2000, p. 70).
14. Kershaw (2000, p. 131).
15. Kershaw (2000, p. 116).
16. Aly (2006, p. 52).
17. Aly (2006, pp. 146–148).
18. Aly (2006, p. 107).
19. Kühl (2016, p. 88).
20. Aly (2006, p. 324).
21. Aly (2006, p. 136).
22. Quoted in Aly (2006, p. 107).
23. Quoted in Aly (2006, p. 17).
24. Friedländer (2007, p. 130).
25. Rees (2005, p. 19).
26. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 181).
27. Lasik (1998, p. 292).
28. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 255).
29. Hilberg (1961b, p. 1011).
30. Levin and Fox (1985, p. 58).
31. Eggers and Peters (1993, p. 199).
32. Rossino (2003, p. 129).
33. Quoted in Browning (2004, p. 74). See also Buchheim (1968, p. 317) and Headland (1992, p. 211).
34. Westermann (2005, p. 144).

35. Grossman (1995, p. 112).
36. Roseman (2002, p. 24).
37. Rossino (2003, p. 234).
38. Browning (2004, p. 124).
39. The Lódź ghetto was sealed in April 1940 to promote the extraction of Jewish wealth in exchange for food, whereas the Warsaw ghetto was sealed in mid-November 1940 because of fears surrounding the possible spreading of disease and epidemics (Browning 1995, pp. 32–34).
40. Hayes (2017, p. 181).
41. Rutherford (2007, p. 121).
42. Quoted in Mommsen (1997, p. 30).
43. Corni (2002, p. 205).
44. Quoted in Browning (2004, p. 128; 1995, p. 36).
45. Browning (1995, p. 30).
46. Quoted in Browning (1995, p. 36).
47. Browning (1995, p. 36).
48. Hayes (2017, p. 181).
49. Quoted in Browning (2004, p. 125).
50. Quoted in Browning (1995, p. 39).
51. Quoted in Browning (1995, pp. 40–41).
52. Aly and Heim (2002, pp. 243–244).
53. Quoted in Aly and Heim (2002, p. 240).
54. Quoted in Browning (2004, p. 156).
55. Bauer (1982, p. 170).
56. Browning (1995, p. 47).
57. At a meeting on 19 April 1941, Frank argued: "That one cannot dissolve the ghetto and leave the Jews in freedom, over that there is still full agreement" (quoted in Browning 2004, p. 129). Having said that, with so little food entering the Warsaw ghetto, Browning has also pointed out that occasionally these German administrators still felt it was "necessary to tolerate gaps in the ghetto cordon" (2004, p. 130). For similar such behavior, see Langerbein (2004, p. 138).
58. Lanzmann (1995, p. 179). For an opposing example where "dead Jews" in the Warsaw ghetto "were becoming a sight not to be missed by German tourists," see Friedländer (2007, p. 160).
59. Hayes (2017, p. 180).
60. Quoted in Kühne (2010, p. 80). Then again, if the Jewish managers failed to perform their duties, the Germans had no qualms over entering a ghetto with devastating force, as they did in Lublin on 16 March 1942 or during the Warsaw ghetto uprising (Cesarani 2016, pp. 469, 613–617).

61. Photos and film footage of conditions in the ghettos were frequently recorded and sent back to Germany, but these were only used for "educational" purposes to reinforce the Nazi regime's carefully manufactured antisemitic stereotypes and propaganda (Friedländer 2007, p. 38). One such example can be found in Abraham Lewin's diary, dated 19 May 1942: "Today" in the Warsaw ghetto the Nazi authorities "set up a film session in Szulc's restaurant. […] They brought in Jews they had rounded up…sat them down at the tables and ordered that they be served with all kinds of food and drinks…meat, fish, liqueurs, white pastries and other delicacies. The Jews ate and the Germans filmed. It is not hard to imagine the motivation behind this. Let the world see the kind of paradise the Jews are living in" (quoted in Friedländer 2007, p. 394).
62. Lifton (1986, pp. 24, 27). See also Koonz (2003, p. 127).
63. Quoted in Friedlander (1995, p. 67).
64. Hayes (2017, p. 117).
65. Quoted in Russell (2009, p. 47).
66. See also Fritzsche (2008, p. 158, as cited in Stone 2010, pp. 75–76).
67. Quoted in Friedlander (1995, p. 86).
68. Friedlander (1995, p. 88).
69. Friedlander (1995, pp. 86–87).
70. Montague (2012, p. 14).
71. Montague (2012, p. 16).
72. Montague (2012, p. 17).
73. Montague (2012, pp. 16, 18).
74. Montague (2012, pp. 18–19).
75. Montague (2012, pp. 19–20).
76. Montague (2012, p. 21).
77. Montague (2012, p. 22).
78. Montague (2012, p. 23).
79. Adam (1989, p. 136).
80. Quoted in Adam (1989, p. 136).
81. Adam (1989, p. 137).
82. Friedlander (1995, p. 87).
83. Fleming (1984, p. 24).
84. Montague (2012, pp. 23–25, 28).
85. Browning (1985, p. 59).
86. Montague (2012, pp. 29–30).
87. Friedlander (1995, pp. 109–110).
88. Rummel (1992, p. 13, as cited in Markusen and Kopf 1995, p. 131).
89. Cesarani (2004, p. 92).
90. Fleming (1984, p. 44).

91. During the summer of 1940 Heydrich argued, "The Jews are considered hostile to us because of our standpoint on race. For this reason they are of no use to us in the Reich. We must eliminate them. Biological extermination, however, is undignified for the German people as a civilized nation. Thus after the victory we will impose the condition on the enemy powers that the holds of their ships be used to transport the Jews along with their belongings to Madagascar or elsewhere" (quoted in Aly 1999, p. 3).

92. In the November 1938 edition of *Das Schwarze Korps*, Heydrich mentions his desire for the "absolute annihilation" of German Jewry (quoted in Breitman 1991, p. 58).

93. Longerich (2010, p. 164).

94. See Mommsen (1986, p. 120) and Browning (2004, pp. 88–89).

95. Following the Polish invasion in 1939, as Eduard Könekamp of the German Foreign Institute said in a report to his colleagues about the Jews: "Exterminating these subhumans would be in the best interests of the whole world. But exterminating them poses incredibly difficult problems. There are too many of them to shoot. And one can't simply shoot women and children. […] But an effective solution to this complicated problem has yet to be found" (quoted in Aly and Heim 2002, p. 127).

96. Bauer (2001, p. 30).

97. Breitman (1991, p. 139).

98. Quoted in Friedlander (1995, p. 142). Arad (1987, p. 9) suggests that Himmler made this request to Bouhler earlier, during "the summer of 1940…"

99. Lifton (1986, p. 135).

100. Hayes (2017, p. 119).

101. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, pp. 280–281).

102. Rees provides a slightly later date where "14f13…reached Auschwitz on July 28" (2005, p. 43). See also Cesarani (2016, p. 528).

103. This is according to Kazimierz Smoleń, a political prisoner at Auschwitz (Rees 2005, pp. 43–44).

104. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, pp. 280–281).

105. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 280).

106. Lifton (1986, p. 142).

107. Quoted in Aly and Heim (2002, p. 180).

108. Quoted in Krakowski (1993, p. 74). During the first six months of the Soviet invasion conditions for Jews improved in the Polish ghettos because demand for manufactured goods increased within the Germany war economy (Cesarani 2016, pp. 433–435). Having said this, the poorest unemployed Jews still starved in the streets.

109. Quoted in Browning (1985, p. 4).
110. Montague (2012, pp. 29–30).
111. See Longerich (2010, p. 264).
112. Browning (2004, p. 354).
113. Adam (1989, p. 139), Breitman (1991, p. 197), Browning (1985, p. 59), Fleming (1984, p. 48), Friedlander (1995, p. 286) and Specktor (1993, p. 52).
114. Hilberg (1961a, p. 257).
115. Cesarani (2016, p. 83).
116. Breitman (1991).
117. Arendt (1984, p. 36).
118. See Mommsen (1986, pp. 102, 114).
119. Mommsen (1986, pp. 122–126).
120. Browning (2004, p. 320).
121. Breitman (2000, p. 34).
122. Browning (2004, p. 216).
123. Browning (2004, p. 217).
124. Quoted in Förster (1981, p. 13).
125. Quoted in Breitman (1991, p. 58).
126. Browning (2004, p. 238).
127. Cesarani (2016, p. 352).
128. Hilberg (1992, p. 250) and Schleunes (1970, p. 256).
129. Aly and Heim (2002, p. 179) and Cesarani (2004, p. 92).
130. Browning (2004, p. 225) and Büchler (1986, p. 12).
131. MacLean (1999, p. 13).
132. Breitman (2000, p. 45). See also Browning (2004, p. 233).
133. Breitman (2000, p. 44).
134. The Krausnick versus Streim debate is whether the execution squads were given direct orders just before the start of the war demanding that *all* Jews be killed (as Krausnick suspects), or just the men be killed, with women and children added as targets a few months later in August or September (as Streim suspects). There are limitations with both perspectives. The problem with Krausnick's theory is that a universal order before the start of Operation Barbarossa has never been found. But this weakness does not render Streim correct. As Longerich (2005, p. 214) argues: "While Krausnick's assumption of an early, universal annihilation order can clearly be disproved, we should, on the other hand, go further than Streim in emphasizing that the task allotted to the Einsatzgruppen, prior to 22 June, involved a mass murder whose limits were unclear. This order already contained within it the tendency towards total annihilation, and it was deliberately left up to the death squads themselves to decide what limits to place on the killings. Here we see a form of issuing

of orders which relied upon interaction, fully in keeping with Nazi tradition." See the Krausnick versus Streim debate (Breitman 1991, p. 290).

135. Quoted in Matthäus (2007, p. 234).
136. Matthäus (2007, p. 220).
137. Breitman (1991, pp. 129–130).
138. Roseman (2002, p. 24) and Rossino (2003, p. 234).
139. Rossino (2003, p. 70).
140. Manoschek (2002, p. 167, as cited in Kühl 2016, p. 144).
141. Quoted Brackmann and Berkenhauer (1988, p. 214, cited in Kühl 2016, p. 144). See also Longerich (2010, pp. 220, 289).
142. As Mommsen (1986, p. 122) argues, "The massacres also provided an opportunity to rid the German-occupied territories of a part of the Jewish population, which had by then increased beyond any 'manageable' size."
143. See Longerich (2005, p. 214).
144. Friedlander (1995, p. 286).
145. As Graml argues, the persecution of the Jews was about the "maturation" of "an essentially radical conviction…" "[A]s early as 1933" when, according to earlier threats, all German Jews were to be hung, neither "Hitler nor any other National Socialist would have been capable…of issuing the command for a mass murder of the Jews" (1991, p. 175, as cited in Stone 2010, p. 66).
146. Longerich (2010, pp. 204–205).
147. Kwiet (1998, p. 4).
148. See Longerich (2008, pp. 543–558, as cited in Stone 2010, p. 104).
149. Browning has pointed out that before the Soviet invasion, "Numerous materials were circulated among the police to provide the basis for these ideological training sessions" (2004, p. 232). The supply of this material increased as the campaign progressed (Westermann 2005, p. 109). See also Langerbein (2004, p. 19) and Heer (1997, pp. 89–90) for the Einsatzgruppen.
150. Units in the Order Police, like Battalion 322, for example, underwent similar ideological indoctrination and military training (Breitman 2000, p. 45). See also Browning (2004, p. 232) and Kwiet (1993, p. 77).
151. Breitman (2000, p. 45).
152. Bloxham and Kushner (2005, p. 137).
153. Müller-Hill (1996, p. 63).
154. Müller-Hill (1996, p. 63).
155. MacLean (1999, p. 144).
156. Earl (2009, p. 122).
157. Browning (2004, p. 228).
158. Matthäus (2004, p. 263). See also Longerich (2010, p. 219).

159. Breitman (2000, p. 48).
160. Quoted in Browning (2004, pp. 222–223).
161. Browning (2004, p. 242) and Longerich (1998, p. 417, as cited in Matthäus 2007, p. 234). The use of ambiguous orders that enable leaders to evade full responsibility for their men's destructive actions is not unique to the Nazis. According to one member of the US volunteer cavalry, just before the 1864 Sand Creek massacre in Colorado of mostly indigenous American women and children, Colonel John Chivington told his men "Boys, I shall not tell you what you are to kill, but remember our slaughtered women and children." This statement was verified by other members of the militia (Michno 2017, p. 62).
162. According to a witness during a 1962 court trial in Berlin, among the Einsatzgruppen shooting squads there was a "race for the highest numbers" of victims (as cited in Langerbein 2004, p. 59).
163. Browning (1995, p. 113).
164. To repeat Bauer's words "a high proportion of [Nazi] Party members were not extreme antisemites; rather, they shared an antisemitism that one could define as pervasive, yet not necessarily murderous, perhaps even 'moderate'" (2001, p. 31). Although these words are less likely to apply to the carefully selected shooting squad leaders, they are likely to have applicability to many of the rank and file executioners, who did not undergo individual selection for Operation Barbarossa.
165. Breitman (2000, pp. 44–45).
166. Browning (1995, p. 113).

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CHAPTER 4

Operation Barbarossa and the Holocaust by Bullets—Top-Down Forces

This chapter explores the top-down forces utilized by the SS leadership to encourage ordinary and moderately antisemitic Germans to participate in the genocide of Jewish men, then women, and finally all Jews, including children and babies. It delineates the SS leadership's central role in driving the extermination of Soviet Jewry. This chapter supports the previous argument that *before* the campaign, the SS leadership desired, but did not directly order, the extermination of Soviet Jewry. More specifically, because ordinary Germans had participated in the killings of fairly large numbers of "Untermenschen" over the previous few years, the SS leadership suspected before Operation Barbarossa that their men might willingly exterminate every Soviet Jew encountered. They could not, however, be certain, and consequently, they felt it unwise to set out by issuing direct orders. Instead, during the invasion Himmler and Heydrich planned to do all they could to socially engineer their desire— the so-called Führer's wish—into reality. I would argue that the SS leadership's rational intention to convert Hitler's desires into reality shares some similarity with the initially uncertain Milgram where, while inventing his baseline procedure, he did all he could to maximize his participants' participation in harm doing.

But if, from the start of the Soviet campaign, there were no direct official orders to kill all Jews, then the "staggering…speed with which the wave of mass murder gathered pace" remains a mystery.[1] The next two chapters aim to shed some new light on this mystery. This depressing chapter in history begins with the so-called Holocaust by bullets.

Operation Barbarossa

Operation Barbarossa began on 22 June 1941 when three million German troops entered Soviet territory. Following the Wehrmacht came the 3000 or so members of the four Einsatzgruppen units and at least nine thousand Order Police—about 18 battalions in all.[2] As the Germans rapidly advanced into Soviet territory, large numbers of Red Army soldiers were, as Himmler had predicted, captured and sent to Nazi labor camps like Auschwitz I. Himmler had instructed Einsatzkommando Tilsit to carry out executions in response to sniper attacks against Germans. Between 24 and 27 June, Tilsit undertook three separate executions killing a total of 526 (mostly Jewish) Lithuanian men.[3] These deaths signaled the start of the Holocaust in the Soviet interior.[4] Himmler and Heydrich were apparently delighted with this early first effort.[5]

On 25 June, the leader of Einsatzgruppe A, Franz Stahlecker, entered the Lithuanian city of Kaunas (or Kovno).[6] In compliance with Heydrich's orders, Stahlecker assessed the intensity of local antisemitic fervor and released convicts from a prison, thus instigating possibly the first pogrom of the campaign. On 27 June, a colonel in the Wehrmacht unwittingly stumbled on the pogrom. He saw a cheering crowd and, curious as to what was taking place, inquired further.

> …I was told that the 'Death-dealer of Kovno' was at work and that this was where collaborators and traitors were finally meted out their rightful punishment! When I stepped closer, however, I became witness to probably the most frightful event that I had seen during the course of two world wars. […] a blond man of medium height, aged about twenty-five, stood leaning on a wooden club, resting. The club was as thick as his arm and came up to his chest. At his feet lay about fifteen to twenty dead or dying people. […] Just a few steps behind this man some twenty men, guarded by armed civilians, stood waiting for their cruel execution in silent submission. In response to a cursory wave the next man stepped forward silently and was then beaten to death with the wooden club in the most bestial manner, each blow accompanied by enthusiastic shouts from the audience. At the staff office I subsequently learned that other people already knew about these mass executions, and that they had naturally aroused in them the same feelings of horror and outrage as they had in me.[7]

As bizarre as it might sound, it was not unusual for members of the German armed forces to find this brutal hands-on brand of violence so

offensive that they would step in to save the Jewish victims, at least for the time being.[8] During the above three-week-long pogrom, Lithuanians killed about 3500 Jews.[9] Jewish women and children were not targeted. In other locations across the Eastern front, there was more,[10] less, and no interest at all in killing Jews.[11] Lithuanians may not have killed all or even most Jews, but fewer Jews still meant a smaller Soviet "Jewish problem" for the SS to later deal with. On 29 June, Heydrich issued a written order to "remind" the Einsatzgruppen commanders of his earlier verbal instruction to encourage "self-defense circles…."[12]

At this very early stage of the invasion, however, only a minority of German security forces set out to kill all Jews. One salient example occurred as early as 27 June, thus in violation with the Commissar Order, which never demanded such wide-sweeping actions. In the city of Bialystok, Major Weiss encouraged Police Battalion 309 and the Wehrmacht's 221st Security Division to kill over 2000 Jews—men, women, and children.[13] At one point, at least 500 people were herded into a synagogue, which was dowsed in petrol and set alight with a stick of dynamite thrown through a window. When people desperately tried to escape the inferno through the building's windows, Weiss's men mowed them down with machine guns.[14] One German police officer expressed his reservations over what was taking place and was informed, "You don't seem to have received the right ideological training yet."[15] Even though these Germans exceeded their official orders—how are children instigators of "active or passive resistance" and a threat to security?—Matthäus suspects Himmler approved.[16] Massacres early in the campaign where all Jews were killed were, however, exceptions to the rule. Typically, only Jewish men were targeted during these early executions.[17] There were also examples of behavior at the very opposite end of this violence spectrum. For example, for almost a month following the Commissar Order (until mid-July 1941) the 10th Regiment of the 1st SS Brigade chose only to guard bridges.[18] But it was not long before the demands of the SS leadership increased in both clarity and breadth. For example, on 2 July 1941 Heydrich instructed that, "all Jews in state and party positions" were to be executed.[19]

Then at a 16 July meeting that Browning regards as a "turning point" for the Holocaust,[20] Hitler informed a variety of inner-circle Nazis that Soviet territory was to be transformed into a "Garden of Eden."[21] Browning adds that Hitler, per usual, did not give explicit orders, but the meaning behind his words was clear. "What role could

Jews have in a German Garden of Eden?"[22] Congruent with Himmler and Heydrich's strategy of controlled escalation, the next day the broadest killing orders yet were committed to writing for the first time: From 17 July 1941, according to Heydrich, "all Jews" in the Soviet interior were to be shot.[23]

Einsatzgruppe B commander, Artur Nebe, suggested around mid-July 1941 that with so few men, what was demanded was simply unachievable.[24] Nevertheless, some leaders in the field came up with their own solution to this problem. For example, in early July the German security police in Kaunas formed a battalion consisting of Lithuanians, which came under the control of Karl Jäger's Einsatzkommando 3 (a sub-unit of Stahlecker's Einsatzgruppe A).[25] Also in early July, a fifth Einsatzgruppe was formed.[26] As early as 27 June 1941, Himmler reacted to the emerging manpower issue when he commandeered his Kommandostab Reichsführer SS brigades from the army (a total of 25,000 men), arguing, "I need these units for other tasks."[27] Out of the 25,000 men, Himmler only intended to use Higher SS and Police Leader Friedrich Jeckeln's 7000-strong SS Brigade One and SS and Police Leader Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski's 4000-strong SS Cavalry Brigade to kill civilians.[28] There was also another SS Brigade headed by Higher SS and Police Leader Hans-Adolf Prützmann.[29] These men under Himmler's "personal command" mainly provided a second wave to the Einsatzgruppen's first murderous sweep of the new territories.[30] According to Breitman, the men in these Brigades were, relatively speaking, "a less politicized force than the Einsatzgruppen," and "not part of a political-ideological elite."[31]

In terms of their destructive tasks, how did these ideologically more moderate Germans fare? By 10 July, Himmler had decided to use Bach-Zelewski's men to search for Jews hiding in the Pinsk or Pripet marshes to the east of Lublin. About a week later, on 19 July, these men received orders to engage in the mass murder of all Jews.[32] These orders—directly from Himmler—were repeated on 27 July.[33] Although like many units elsewhere, Bach-Zelewski's men found it fairly stressful to execute Jewish men, they found shooting women and children greatly exacerbated their stress.[34] The existence of psychological difficulties among the execution forces is confirmed in the letters these men sent back to their families in Germany.[35]

Shooters were not the only ones to suffer from intense bouts of stress. Early in the Soviet campaign, SS-Obersturmführer August Häfner

described Sonderkommando 4a leader Paul Blobel's mental breakdown in July 1941, and his desperate call for a less stressful and more efficient killing method.

> I found my unit, they were all running around like lost sheep. I realized that something must have happened and asked what was wrong. Someone told me that [Standartenführer] Blobel had had a nervous breakdown and was in bed in his room. […] He was talking confusedly. He was saying that it was not possible to shoot so many Jews and that what was needed was a plough to plough them into the ground. He had completely lost his mind.[36]

Other squad commanders who did not have to directly kill anybody also proved susceptible to mental breakdowns, including Einsatzkommando 3's Karl Jäger,[37] Higher SS/Police Leader Bach-Zelewski,[38] and (twice) Einsatzgruppe B commander Nebe.[39]

As Himmler and Heydrich had suspected, the order to shoot defenseless civilians *en masse* generated what the men in the field themselves termed Seelenbelastung or "burdening of the soul."[40] The SS Cavalry Brigade's mass shootings of all Jews in the Pripet marshes started to flounder. Similarly, despite Einsatzkommando Tilsit's promising early efforts, Kwiet notes that some of the shooters also started to struggle to implement their orders.

> [T]he attrition rate from psychological problems connected to the killings was not insignificant. Some marksmen in *EK* Tilsit succumbed to feelings of nausea and nervous tension during the massacres. […] In many cases killers suffered vomiting attacks or developed severe eczema or other psychosomatic disorders.[41]

In fact, when Einsatzkommando Tilsit was instructed to also shoot women and children, a small proportion of the men flatly refused to do so. These men were pulled out of the extermination campaign.[42] Such cases of insubordination between the end of July and mid-August of 1941 caused a patently frustrated Himmler to regularly criticize his Einsatzgruppen and police forces.[43] To make matters even more stressful for Himmler, the Einsatzgruppen commanders were instructed on 1 August 1941 that, "the Führer [was] to be kept informed continually from here about the work of the Einsatzgruppen in the East…."[44]

With Hitler having implied only two weeks earlier that he desired that all Jews be shot, Himmler must have wondered if his men were up to the task. The SS leadership was equally interested in knowing how far their officers would go and, as a result, they developed "an almost obsessive interest in receiving information about events in the field."[45] The day after Hitler's request, 2 August, Himmler criticized his SS Cavalry for their "soft behavior," and again demanded they kill more Jews.[46] Both Himmler and Heydrich became notorious for categorizing functionaries as either "soft" or "hard."[47] In response to Himmler, Bach-Zelewski's SS Cavalry Brigade and some local militias continued to shoot at least 3000 Jewish males over the age of five on a daily basis.[48] However, despite Himmler's direct order that the Pinsk action was to be completed, the men flatly refused—thus disobeying direct orders—to kill *all* Jews. This refusal was indicative that these men deemed Himmler's orders unacceptable—tasks they obviously placed outside the parameters of their *Zone of Indifference*. In fact, by the evening of 8 August the action was abandoned.[49]

To halt this kind of insubordination, Himmler and many other senior SS officers below him personally visited the troops in the field and directly instructed them to do as the SS-Reichsführer wanted and kill more Jews.[50] Because the men were struggling, during these visits Himmler also attempted to personally reinforce, as dictated by Nazi ideology, the great necessity of the men's difficult duties.[51] If this did not have the desired effect and the men still refused to kill all Jews, the SS leadership applied more coercive techniques to encourage them to do what they desired. For example, during field visits, Himmler and his most senior commanders told their men that having shot Jewish men they had to eliminate the risk of revenge attacks by also killing the women and children.[52] Officers in the field soon started to rely on this justification for their destructive actions. One, for example, wrote in a letter to his wife, "But we are fighting this war for the survival and non-survival of our people. […] My comrades are literally fighting for the existence of our people."[53] As in Milgram's web of obligation, once one starts moving in such a radical direction, suddenly deciding to stop becomes increasingly difficult. Abruptly stopping, for example, would not erase the fact that, by any definition, these Germans had already become killers of civilians. Primo Levi more specifically terms this manipulative mafia-like technique the "bond of complicity"[54]—where, as Hannah Arendt notes, Germans in the East were encouraged to kill at least one person, and

on performing this "irreversible act" they then entered a "community of violence" that suddenly and forever cut them off from "respectable society."[55] After this, there could be no going back.

If Himmler's persuasions failed to work, one officer noted the SS leadership had other, perhaps even more "malicious," strategies. "Himmler issued an order stating that any man who no longer felt able to take the psychological stresses should report to his superior officer. These men were to be released from their current duties and would be detailed for other work back home."[56] Himmler planned to replace any dropouts with new men. But, this seemingly attractive offer was an "evil trick" designed to highlight those who were "too weak" to be an officer.[57] The officer also suspected (correctly as it turned out) that any declaration of softness would be detrimental to their career path. As Westermann states, "In cases where a final determination was made by the SS-Reichsführer against a policeman, the remark 'unsuited for duties in the East' was added to his personnel file, precluding the opportunity for further promotion."[58] To accept the offer to be released from shooting duties, the men had to be willing to dent the quality of their organizational membership—along with all the fruits associated with it.[59] As a last resort, Himmler could and did fall back on the "Führer Principle" that required "unquestioning obedience to a single leader."[60] As Breitman observes, the SS leadership relied heavily on "the weight of authority to override qualms of conscience or simple distaste for unpleasant tasks."[61]

One limitation of these and other top-down initiatives designed to socially engineer what the SS leadership desired was that they did nothing to physically shield the shooters from the cause of their stress. The closest Himmler came to suggesting such an initiative was when he told Bach-Zelewski's cavalry that, "All [male] Jews must be shot. Drive Jewish females into the swamps."[62] Himmler, it seems, was trying to spare his men from the intense mental anguish associated with being directly responsible for murdering women. The quicksand, Himmler envisioned, would do the dirty work for them. However, the quality of his idea hints at the SS-Reichsführer's desperate state. In early August, SS Sturmbannführer Franz Magill informed Himmler that his idea had failed. "The driving of women and children into the marshes did not have the expected success, because the marshes were not so deep that one could sink. After a depth of about a meter there was in most cases solid ground (probably sand) preventing complete sinking…."[63]

These women and children—about 20,000 people—lived for another year until they were killed during an independent sweep.[64]

Further north, Gustav Lombard, the commander of the Mounted Unit of the 1st SS Cavalry Regiment, continued to push his men hard: "Not one male Jew is to remain alive, not one remnant family in the villages."[65] Between 1 and 11 August, Lombard's men killed about 1000 Jewish men, women, and children per day.[66] It is no coincidence that soon afterward Himmler promoted Lombard but demoted Magill.[67] Certainly, this was, as Matthäus notes, one effective way to ensure that the "…unit commanders of the Security and Order Police got the message about the desired course of action and adapted in order to please their superiors. Clearly, these officers were talking to each other and observing what their colleagues elsewhere were doing."[68]

Finally the SS-Reichsführer "Understands"

Himmler, incensed by the refusal of some men to carry out his orders, and constantly reminded of their emotional difficulties, asked Einsatzgruppe B commander Nebe on 15 August 1941 to organize an execution while he (Himmler) was in Minsk.[69] Having heard so much fuss, Himmler wanted to "see what one of these 'liquidations' really looked like."[70] The SS-Reichsführer's Chief of Personal Staff, Karl Wolff, later stated that, "from his own mouth," Himmler had never seen people killed before.[71] Nebe, in the presence of Bach-Zelewski, arranged for about 100 people to be executed—two of whom were women. Before the mass shooting, Himmler conveyed an air of casual indifference as he asked the Jews some questions. However, his blasé attitude disintegrated as the first volley of shots was fired. His lack of experience of killing was exposed to all present.

> Both Wolff and Bach-Zelewski remembered that Himmler was shaken by the murders. "Himmler was extremely nervous," Bach-Zelewski testified. 'He couldn't stand still. His face was white as cheese, his eyes went wild and with each burst of gunfire he always looked at the ground.'[72]

Much as in the first Obedience pilot series where some participants engaged in avoidance-type behaviors, Himmler looked away from the disturbing things happening in front of him; unlike the executioners, who could not do so.[73] Kwiet notes the inspection "caused Himmler

nausea (Unwohlsein) and symptoms of nervous collapse."[74] When the two women lay down to be shot members of the squad lost their nerve, and fired badly, injuring, rather than killing them. At that point, Himmler "panicked [and] […] jumped up and screamed at the squad commander: 'Don't torture these women! Fire! Hurry up and kill them!'"[75] This event illustrates how Himmler's idea of shooting did not equate with the task's disturbing perceptual reality. "Almost fainting, pale, limbs quivering" Himmler had come to understand personally the problem his men were facing.[76] Bach-Zelewski must have felt vindicated because he then told Himmler, "*Reichsführer*, those were only a hundred. […] Look at the eyes of the men in this *Kommando*, how deeply shaken they are! These men are finished [*fertig*] for the rest of their lives. What kind of followers are we training here? Either neurotics or savages!"[77] Adolf Eichmann felt similarly. "I said [to the local SS Commander in Lwów] young people are being made into sadists. How can one do that? Simply bang away at women and children? That is impossible. Our people will go mad or become insane…."[78]

As the leading figure present at the Minsk execution, Himmler felt compelled to try to reduce his men's distress by providing them with a variety of strain resolving justifications. He reminded them that they need not feel guilty over what they did because—relying on the ability to displace individual responsibility elsewhere in the division of labor—they were only following his, and therefore Hitler's, orders. Somewhat related to this, Himmler understood, as presumably they should, that these difficult and repulsive tasks were absolutely necessary. Finally, Himmler reminded the men that although vermin has a purpose in life, this did not mean that humankind could not defend itself.[79] This kind of strain resolving speech was in line with Himmler's preconceived strategy of providing the men with a reason to kill.[80] On the eve of a *Judenaktionen*, execution squads were purposefully flooded with a deluge of antisemitic propaganda—speeches, literature, films, and documentaries.[81] Nonetheless, as this event—and the last month or so—had illustrated, a determined Himmler did everything he could think of to best ensure his men killed all Jews.[82]

After the mass shooting in Minsk, Himmler, Wolff, Bach-Zelewski, and Nebe visited a recently formed ghetto, which included a large institution housing the mentally ill. Himmler, who by this time had clearly calmed down, suggested in strain resolving, euphemistic terms that Nebe "release" (i.e., kill) the patients.[83] But for reasons discussed below, the

shooters found killing such people nerve wracking. In fact, Nebe had already informed his deputy Paul Werner that he (Nebe) "could not ask his troops to shoot these incurably insane people."[84] Nebe therefore inquired how Himmler thought he might carry out the task. Himmler replied "that today's event had brought him to the conclusion that death by shooting was certainly not the most humane"[85] and asked Nebe "'to turn over in his mind' various other killing methods more humane than shooting."[86] This was not a throwaway request. Himmler knew that Nebe had overcome similar killing-related obstacles during his time working in the T4's euthanasia program.[87] This single conversation, as we shall see, powerfully influenced the fate of massive numbers of Jews and other groups such as the German Gypsies, who were also forced into the Polish ghettos.[88]

Pilot Studies in Killing Mid-to-Late 1941

Nebe went on to consult a former colleague from the euthanasia program, chemist Albert Widmann, one of the inventors of the bottled (pure) carbon monoxide gassing technique. Widmann came from the Reich Security Main Office's (RSHA) Criminal Technology Institute in Berlin. During the middle of September 1941, Nebe and Widmann engaged in their first ad hoc experiment. Just as Milgram had done by introducing a wall into his basic procedure, if Nebe and Widmann were to successfully diminish the "burdening of the soul," they would need to reduce the perceptual intensity associated with the act of harming. The duo's first experiment using explosives intuitively moved in this direction, but failed to achieve the goal. "Twenty-five mentally ill people were locked into two bunkers in a forest outside Minsk. The first explosion killed only some of them, and it took much time and trouble until the second explosion killed the rest. Explosives therefore were unsatisfactory."[89] Wilhelm Jaschke, a captain in Einsatzkommando 8, provides a more detailed account of what happened.

> The sight was atrocious. The explosion hadn't been powerful enough. Some wounded came out of the dugout crawling and crying. […] The bunker had totally collapsed. […] Body parts were scattered on the ground and hanging in the trees. On the next day, we collected the body parts and threw them into the bunker. Those parts that were too high in the trees were left there.[90]

Obviously, this pilot was a total failure.

A month later, in October 1941, a group of men under Odilo Globocnik (commander of Lublin's SS and Police) independently developed a remarkably similar method of killing. Their technique required victims to lie in a ditch head-to-toe in batches of ten. Then, Globocnik's men would seek cover and lob hand grenades on top of them. Again, body parts filled the air. Although this method enabled the perpetrators to avoid the horrific visual spectacle when killing, occasionally some victims were not killed outright. The severely wounded required what the perpetrators, using strain resolving euphemistic language, called "mercy shots"—a visually disturbing task they did not enjoy. Though Globocnik's men are believed to have killed about 75,000 civilians using this technique,[91] it would seem that its distasteful side effects led to the grenade technique's eventual abandonment.

Two months earlier in August 1941, hundreds of miles away in Austria's Mauthausen concentration camp, Himmler had (as part of the 14f13 program) begun organizing for those prisoners no longer capable of labor to be gassed at the T4 facility in Hartheim, located about 30 kilometers to the west.[92] This approach was costly and time-consuming, and so in October—the same month Globocnik's men were trialing their grenade killing technique—staff at Mauthausen started experimenting with a new method of their own. Inmates sentenced to death were deceived into thinking they were to have their photograph taken. After being instructed to stand opposite a camera-like device and pressing their back up against a section of wall vertically lined with small holes, an SS man on the other side would then surreptitiously shoot the inmate in the back of the neck. After the execution, another inmate would quickly transfer the body to an adjoining mortuary and clean away all traces of what had just taken place, resetting the scene for the next victim. This shooting technique was capable of killing about 30 inmates per hour.[93] However, this killing method must have been abandoned because up until February 1942 Mauthausen continued shipping its unproductive prisoners to Hartheim.[94] The prisoner manifest at Mauthausen continued to grow and so did the expense of getting rid of so-called useless mouths. Camp staff continued to search for a better—cheaper, efficient yet, for the perpetrators, inoffensive—means of ending the lives of unproductive prisoners.

Back in the Soviet interior, the failure of Nebe and Widmann's explosives experiment did not dent their motivation to continue searching for

a more "humane" way of killing civilians. At an asylum in Mogilev, the duo embarked on a second experiment. Nebe, with Widmann's help, drew on his own previous experience and intuition to develop a method of killing that he thought ordinary Germans might willingly use. Nebe recalled an experience many years earlier when, after having driven home drunk one evening, he nearly killed himself after failing to turn the vehicle's engine off inside a garage.[95] Drawing on this near-death experience, Nebe connected one end of a hose to the exhaust pipe of a running motor vehicle and the other end to a hermetically sealed room containing 20–30 mentally ill patients. The people inside the room soon died. A cheap, abundant, and mobile alternative gas to that used in the T4 euthanasia program had been found.

Widmann's trial after the war revealed that, "Nebe discussed the technical aspects of the idea with Dr. Heess and together they brought the proposal before Heydrich who adopted it."[96] When Heydrich caught wind of this experiment, he contacted some subordinates in the RSHA, and they asked Friedrich Pradel and his chief mechanic Harry Wentritt[97] if exhaust gas could be directed into a truck's sealed cargo cabin. The reasoning behind this idea was because "the firing squads in Russia suffered frequent nervous breakdowns and needed [what Pradel termed] a "more humane" method of killing."[98] Based on Nebe's idea, Wentritt constructed the first exhaust gas van prototype and in early November a killing pilot test was conducted on a group of Soviet POWs in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.[99] The results were so satisfactory that from November 1941 the van prototype was put into production.[100] The first vans constructed in Wentritt's garage were sent to the East.

As Nebe and Widmann conducted their trial-and-error experiments in the East, in Auschwitz I a similar yet completely independent set of experiments was taking place. Soon after the start of Operation Barbarossa, Soviet POWs began arriving at Auschwitz I. The camp's Commandant, Rudolf Höss, had been ordered to immediately execute the officer ranks.[101] The Soviet officers were shot in small groups at the infamous Black Wall.[102] Despite initial enthusiasm, the German guards soon tired of the bloody task. As elsewhere, Höss and his men "had had enough of…the mass killings by firing squad ordered by Himmler and Heydrich."[103] The shootings were moved to a more secluded location, and it was not long before the task started to fall on the shoulders of a select few who decided,

it would be more efficient to bring the condemned to the crematorium and kill them in the mortuary. "The walls were stained with blood, and in the background there lay the corpses of those already shot," [Pery] Broad [who worked in Auschwitz's Political Department] wrote after the war. "A wide stream of blood was flowing towards the drain in the middle of the hall. The victims were obliged to step quite close to the corpses and formed a line. Their feet were stained with blood; they stood in puddles of it. […] The right-hand man of the camp leader, *SS-Hauptscharführer* Palitzsch, did the shooting. He killed one person after another with a practiced shot in the back of the neck." The stench was so foul that in the summer of 1941 the chief of the political department, Grabner, prevailed on Schlachter to install a more sophisticated ventilation system that not only extracted the air he found sickening but also brought in a fresh supply from outside.[104]

Höss' deputy, Karl Fritzsch, also soon tired of these mass shootings. One day when Höss was away, Fritzsch decided to pursue an experiment. The idea for his experiment was stimulated by the camp's omnipresent vermin problem: Some of Fritzsch's men had been sent back to Germany to receive training in the use of Zyklon-B, an effective and deadly pesticide. Zyklon-B consisted of small pellets that turned into gas when exposed to oxygen at a temperature of (or above) 25.7 degrees Celsius.[105] If Zyklon-B could easily kill vermin, it probably could kill humans as well.

On 3 September 1941 (less than two weeks before Nebe's experiments), a large group of Soviet and Polish prisoners were placed in a sealed detention cell known as Block 11. Pellets of the pesticide were then dropped into a small number of re-sealable vents in the roof. The victims died soon afterward.[106] Upon Höss's return, Fritzsch replicated his experiment. Höss later admitted being surprised that Zyklon-B killed the victims so quickly. "A short, almost smothered cry, and it was all over."[107] And it was cheap—it was established that around this point in time, it costs less than one US cent per victim killed.[108] But most pleasing for Höss was that he was "relieved to think that we were to be spared all those blood-baths…."[109] Unlike stressful shootings, for Höss "the gassings had a calming effect on me…."[110] By instituting what Höss and his men found to be a less stressful method of killing, Fritzsch had secured for his German executioners a feeling of sufficient indifference needed to ensure they remained within their *Zone of Indifference*. Consequently, Himmler's higher "orders for actions" had, thanks to Fritzsch, become sufficiently inoffensive and thereafter "unquestionably acceptable."[111]

After Fritzsch's experiments, Block 11 was abandoned and the morgue where Gerhard Palitzsch had been undertaking his shootings was converted into a gassing facility. The morgue had an attached crematorium so the victims' bodies would not have to be carted through the camp streets for disposal. Conversion of the mortuary into a gas chamber both reduced prisoner awareness of gassings[112] and made the killings more efficient.[113] The morgue's new ventilation system, initially installed to remove the nauseating smells generated by the mass shootings, serendipitously contributed to the viability of the gassing process by rapidly expelling the poisonous gas.[114] With little delay between gassings, bodies could be transferred to the incinerator located close by in the crematorium.[115] Thus was invented the gas chamber/body disposal unit called Crematorium I, which stimulated a major shift in Nazi killing techniques. Crematorium I's 77.28 square meter gas chamber[116] was capable of killing up to 900 prisoners per gassing[117] several times per day. The only limiting factor was the crematorium's 70-body per day disposal capacity.[118]

As the end of 1941 approached, increasing numbers of prisoners—Soviet officers and non-workers targeted by Operation 14f13—were cheaply gassed and disposed of on-site, thus eliminating the need to shoot the former and, somewhat expensively, ship the latter by train to a T4 gas chamber hundreds of miles away in Germany.[119] Word about Fritzsch's discovery must have spread quickly because soon after the fall of 1941 Mauthausen in Austria started constructing a permanent Zyklon-B gas chamber.[120] Upon the gas chamber's completion in March 1942, transports of prisoners to the T4 facility at Hartheim ceased. On-site gassings with Zyklon-B at Mauthausen continued to 28 April 1945.[121]

Back at Auschwitz I, on 1 October 1941 Karl Bischoff was hired to manage the construction of the massive 100,000-person satellite camp that Himmler had promised to IG Farben officials back in March 1941.[122] This new camp, located about 1.5 kilometers from the main camp, was called Auschwitz II, but is now more infamously known as Auschwitz-Birkenau. Soon after hiring Bischoff, the late fall weather caused an increase in the Soviet POW death rate.[123] The advancing cold and damp conditions, in conjunction with Auschwitz I's new efficient gassing method, caused an accumulation of bodies requiring cremation. Furthermore, Bischoff anticipated on the horizon a second and much greater body disposal problem: Himmler's 100,000-person

satellite camp would, through the attrition associated with a camp with little food or heating, likely generate an even greater number of bodies in need of disposal. On 11 November, Bischoff addressed the first relatively minor problem with a plan to increase Crematorium I's 70-body per day incineration capacity. He did so by requesting that engineer Kurt Prüfer from the firm Topf & Sons (designers and builders of Crematorium I) install a third incinerator.[124] The potentially greater second problem was addressed during a meeting on 21 and 22 October 1941 when Prüfer convinced Bischoff to commission his company to build an industrial-sized crematorium. The new structure was to be built behind Crematorium I in Auschwitz I.[125] Prüfer estimated that this massive crematorium would be capable of incinerating about 1440 bodies every 24 hours.[126] This industrial crematorium even came with an elevator, making it easier to transport any bodies in excess of this number to what Bischoff and Prüfer anticipated would be two large basement-level morgues.[127]

By mid-1941 to late 1941, then, as a result of experiments conducted by a variety of Nazi officials in places as far apart as Minsk, Mogilev, Lublin, Auschwitz I, and Mauthausen, new killing techniques had been discovered in an effort to find less stressful methods of disposing of large numbers of civilians than those offered by military-style mass shooting. Most of these experiments failed, or for some reason or another proved unviable, but as will be shown, further refinements—ironing out the kinks—ensured that Nebe and Fritzsch's discoveries would gain prominence. With exhaust fumes (carbon monoxide) and Zyklon-B, from September 1941 the Nazis had two cheap, plentiful, and mobile gases. They were the final remaining ingredient Himmler and Heydrich needed to convert the "Führer's wish" into a reality. The gaps in the theoretical formula that made total extermination possible were closing and a feasible "rough outline" was emerging.[128] The gassing option was now a topic that any ambitious, goal-orientated, problem-solving Nazi bureaucrat could raise in discussions of how to rationally and permanently resolve the "Jewish question." September 1941 is therefore another important date in the history of the Holocaust. With Germany on the verge of gaining total hegemony over continental Europe, exterminating all of European Jewry was becoming increasingly possible. These discoveries therefore injected enormous power into any decision to exterminate European Jewry.[129] However, the careful design, construction, and testing of a large-scale gassing enterprise would take some time. So in the

succeeding months after Himmler observed the mid-August mass execution in Minsk, the shootings had to continue.

The Holocaust by Bullets Continues

Himmler's insistence that shootings continue saw more squad leaders directly confront the SS-Reichsführer over the effect that the "burdening of the soul" was having on their men.[130] By 1942, Heinz Jost, the new commander of Einsatzgruppe A, had become so concerned about the mental state of some of his men that he felt it necessary to directly challenge Himmler. Jost, however, got no further than others before him. Himmler snapped back, "Are you a philosopher? What is the meaning of this? What do you mean, problems? All that is concerned are our orders."[131] Himmler's response may have been strategic. By refusing to sympathize with his squad leaders' concerns, he ensured that most returned to their troops with nothing but bad news: They had to follow the SS-Reichsführer's original command. The leaders in the field would keep pushing their men until they grew accustomed to their grisly tasks, or else broke down. When some did break down, Himmler simply advised that these men be sent home and replaced with new shooters. As Gustave Fix of Sonderkommando 6 said, "I would also like to mention that as a result of the considerable psychological pressures, there were numerous men who were no longer capable of conducting executions and who thus had to be replaced by other men."[132] Without access to new killing methods, Himmler must have felt this was the only way to deal with the ongoing problem with shooter stress.

Himmler's attrition and replacement policy were likely to have had another, albeit unanticipated, effect on the rates of killing. As Arendt insightfully noted, time saw the attrition and replacement policy eventually produce a concentration of ordinary men who differed from the ordinary men who dropped out—they could more regularly handle the intense strain associated with their bloody tasks.[133] Therefore, the Germans who remained differed significantly from those who dropped out in that the former were not just willing, they were also able. Consider, for example, Einsatzkommando 3's leader Karl Jäger who submitted a ledger-style progress report to Berlin that denoted over 130,000 victims killed between 7 July and 25 November 1941. Before

presenting this astounding statistic, Jäger wrote, "Following the formation of a raiding squad under the command of SS-Obersturmführer Hamann and *8-10 reliable men* from the Einsatzkommando the following actions were conducted in cooperation with Lithuanian partisans" [italics added].[134] Such "reliable men"—selected by superiors because of their "strong nerves"[135]—earned the term "Dauer-Schützen" (permanent shooters).[136]

It would seem, therefore, that the SS leadership's gradually escalating orders and exertion of unrelenting top-down pressure started to have its desired effect. In June 1941, only men were targeted; however, by July women were regularly being killed. And by mid-August children were targeted.[137] This general pattern—initial apprehension through to embracing the shooting of all Jews—is reflected in the body counts. Consider the Einsatzgruppen, for example. From 22 June to mid-August 1941—that is seven weeks into Operation Barbarossa and over a month after the first direct orders were issued that all Jews be killed—the numbers of Jews shot varied from squad to squad, and region to region. Karl Jäger's Einsatzkommando 3 achieved unusually high numbers; 9188 civilians shot (10% of whom were women, with children spared).[138] Conversely, the entire Einsatzgruppe D commanded by Otto Ohlendorf only shot 4425 Jews during the same period.[139] By the end of July, the sum total of victims killed by all Einsatzgruppen units came to 62,805 civilians,[140] most of whom (about 90%) were Jews.[141] The victims were again almost exclusively males.[142] However, after mid-August the death toll rapidly escalated. In the two weeks ending the month, Jäger's Einsatzkommando 3 killed 33,000 civilians (including an increasing proportion of females and now also children). The same pattern applied to the previously sluggish Einsatzgruppe D whose death toll before the end of September rose to 36,000.[143] From August onward, entire Jewish communities started disappearing. Perhaps even to the surprise of Himmler and Heydrich, the German security forces and their Eastern European collaborators ended up exterminating about 1.4 million Jews.[144] In his summary of these events, Friedländer captures this almost exponential escalation in death rates and the ongoing mystery surrounding them:

> There is something at once profoundly disturbing yet rapidly numbing in the narration of the anti-Jewish campaign that developed in the territories

newly occupied by the Germans or their allies. History seems to turn into a succession of mass killing operations and, on the face of it, little else. […] All there is to report, it seems, is a rising curve of murder statistics, in the North, the Center, the South, and the Extreme South.[145]

Conclusion

What factors explain this rapid change from small- to large-scale slaughter? It would seem the SS leadership's persuasive, forceful, and sometimes coercive orders exerted a key top-down pressure. As Bloxham and Kushner argue, Himmler, often after meetings with Hitler, was instrumentally involved in "driving the murder process" forward.[146] And once it was clear that all Jews were to be killed, shooters either pulled out or continued to participate. Those that remained were the men capable of fulfilling their superior officers' seemingly incontestable orders. As Matthäus argues, "Undoubtedly, encouragement from above had the effect of speeding things up."[147] Thus, it is tempting to argue that obedience to authority played *the* key role in these destructive actions. When, however, a so-called tendency to obey is used to explain obedience, the logic is tautological, as was the case with Milgram's theoretical assertions (see Volume 1). Nevertheless, the perpetrators later interpreted their own actions in this way: They just followed orders from above. And the shooters frequently looked lost for words to find a better explanation. But, despite a common reliance on this defense, the subsequent war crimes trails highlight a glaring weakness. Take, for example, a question by one judge directed at Ohlendorf's assistant, SS Lieutenant Colonel Willy Seibert, who adamantly claimed that he was *only* following orders.

> "Now…after receiving an order…from a superior officer, to shoot your own parents, would you do so?" He blinked his puffy eyes as if to prolong his deliberations and then scanned the courtroom. […] Then, taking a deep breath, he expelled the words like one who had been hit in the chest: 'Mr President, I would not do so.'[148]

And as shown, some Germans refused to participate in the shootings. The shooters, therefore, did not *have* to follow their orders. Instead, they *chose* to do so.

When, however, one considers the interactive effect of the SS leadership's unrelenting top-down pressure *in conjunction* with bottom-up

forces generated by those in the killing field (men who happened to be armed with a means of inflicting harm that, in terms of perceptual stimulation, could potentially be lowered to the point that killing other humans became psychologically less burdensome), the mystery behind Friedländer's so-called rising curve of murder statistics becomes much more comprehensible.

NOTES

1. Matthäus (2007, p. 219).
2. Breitman (2000, p. 41). For variations on the variety and number of security forces personnel, see Browning (1995, p. 105) and Kwiet (1993, p. 78).
3. Kwiet (1998, pp. 4, 6).
4. Breitman (2000, p. 43).
5. Longerich (2012, p. 525).
6. Kwiet (1998, p. 14).
7. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, pp. 28–29).
8. See, for example, Arendt (1984, p. 190).
9. Kwiet (1998, p. 14).
10. See, for example, Matthäus (2004, pp. 260–261).
11. See, for example, Corni (2002, p. 34), Gerlach (1997, p. 56, as cited in Matthäus 2004, p. 273), and Longerich (2005, p. 209).
12. Quoted in Browning (2004, p. 228). See also Cesarani (2016, p. 358).
13. See Goldhagen (1996, pp. 188–191) and Matthäus (2004, p. 255).
14. See also Browning (2004, p. 233).
15. Quoted in Matthäus (2007, p. 224).
16. Matthäus (2007, p. 224). See also Browning (2000, p. 142).
17. Kwiet (1998, p. 17). See also Streim (1981, p. 89, as cited in Kershaw 2000, p. 117).
18. Matthäus (2004, p. 256).
19. Quoted in Streit (1994, p. 105).
20. Browning (1995, p. 111).
21. Quoted in Browning (2004, p. 309).
22. Browning (2004, p. 310).
23. Streit (1994, pp. 108–109).
24. Browning (2004, p. 313).
25. Matthäus (2007, p. 231).
26. Longerich (2010, p. 185).
27. Quoted in Büchler (1986, p. 14). See also Browning (2004, p. 233).
28. Büchler (1986, pp. 15–18).

29. Cesarani (2016, pp. 357–358).
30. Büchler (1986, p. 15).
31. Breitman (2000, p. 41). In relation to the much larger Wehrmacht, Neitzel and Welzer (2012, p. 319) go even further than Breitman: "As a rule German soldiers were not "ideological warriors." Most of them were fully apolitical […] In war, soldiers tended to behave alike, regardless of whether they were Protestants or Catholics, Nazis or regime critics, Prussians or Austrians, university graduates or uneducated people."
32. Büchler (1986, p. 15).
33. Matthäus (2007, pp. 225–226).
34. See Lifton (1986, p. 15) and Matthäus (2007, pp. 226–227).
35. See, for example, Sereny (2000, p. 141).
36. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 111)
37. Fleming (1984, p. 98).
38. Rubenstein and Roth (1987, p. 134).
39. Gisevius (1966, p. 244, as cited in Rubenstein and Roth 1987, p. 134). See also Browning (1992, p. 69).
40. Quoted in Hilberg (1980, p. 91).
41. Kwiet (1998, p. 20).
42. Kwiet (1998, p. 19).
43. Browning (1992, p. 11; 2004, p. 312), Longerich (2012, p. 539), Lower (2002, p. 5), and Pohl (2000, p. 143, as cited in Bloxham and Kushner 2005, p. 136).
44. Quoted in Fleming (1984, pp. 109–110).
45. Matthäus (2007, p. 232).
46. Büchler (1986, p. 16).
47. See Earl (2009, pp. 156–157), Fleming (1984, p. 85), and Hilberg (1992, p. 55).
48. Büchler (1986, p. 16).
49. Büchler (1986, pp. 16–17).
50. See Bloxham and Kushner (2005, p. 136), Hilberg (1961, pp. 218–219), Kwiet (1998, p. 10), and Matthäus (2007, p. 226).
51. See Kwiet (1998, p. 10), Hilberg (1961, pp. 218–219) and Matthäus (2007, p. 229).
52. Longerich (2012, p. 539). Himmler continued to rely on this argument (see Toland 1976, pp. 701–702).
53. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 163).
54. Levi (1988, p. 43, as cited in Kühne 2010, p. 91).
55. Arendt (1967, p. 67, as cited in Kühne 2010, p. 88).
56. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 82).
57. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 82).
58. Westermann (2005, p. 208).

59. See Kühl (2016).
60. See Valentino (2004, p. 62).
61. Breitman (2000, p. 51).
62. Quoted in Breitman (2000, p. 60).
63. Quoted in Arad et al. (1999, p. 415).
64. Matthäus (2007, p. 227).
65. Quoted in Matthäus (2007, p. 226).
66. Matthäus (2007, p. 226).
67. Matthäus (2007, p. 227).
68. Matthäus (2007, p. 233).
69. Padfield (1990, p. 342).
70. Hilberg (1961, p. 218).
71. Quoted in Padfield (1990, p. 342).
72. Rhodes (2002, p. 152).
73. SS-Brigadier General Erwin Schulz behaved similarly when he organized several shooters to aim at each civilian, "With a keen sense of delicacy, General Schulz would avert his head as the rifles were aimed. Then, after the volley had been fired, he would turn around and see that 'all persons were lying on the ground'" (Musmanno 1961, p. 177). The young Air Force cadets who were actually strong-armed into participating in Einsatzkommando Tilsit's early executions tried the same technique, with disastrous results. These young men were poor shooters because "trembling with anxiety" they tried "closing their eyes while shooting" (Kwiet 1998, p. 20).
74. Kwiet (1993, p. 88). According to Padfield (1990, p. 343), "Wolff watched Himmler jerk convulsively and pass his hand across his face and stagger. He went to him and drew him away from the edge. Himmler's face was almost green; he took out a handkerchief with trembling hands and wiped his cheek where a piece of brain had squirted up on to it. Then he vomited."
75. Rhodes (2002, p. 152). See also Hilberg (1961, p. 218).
76. Adam (1989, p. 139).
77. Quoted in Hilberg (1961, p. 218).
78. Quoted in Arendt (1984, pp. 88–89).
79. Hilberg (1961, pp. 218–219).
80. Breitman (2000, p. 48).
81. Kwiet (1998, p. 17).
82. Longerich (2008, pp. 543–558, as cited in Stone 2010, p. 104).
83. Quoted in Rhodes (2002, p. 154).
84. Quoted in Friedlander (1995, p. 141).
85. Quoted in Rhodes (2002, p. 154).
86. Hilberg (1961, p. 219).

87. See, for example, de Mildt (1996, p. 56) and Friedlander (1995, pp. 54–55, 86–87).
88. See Wytwycky (1980, pp. 32–33, as cited in Markusen and Kopf 1995, p. 128).
89. Arad (1987, p. 10).
90. Quoted in Rees (2005, p. 52). See also Breitman (1991, p. 201), Browning (1985, p. 60) and Friedlander (1995, p. 141).
91. Breitman (1991, p. 201).
92. See Horwitz (1990, pp. 55–58).
93. Horwitz (1990, p. 17). For a similar such device that ostensibly measured height, see Longerich (2010, p. 248).
94. de Mildt (1996, p. 90) and Horwitz (1990, p. 58).
95. Browning (2004, p. 355).
96. Arad (1987, p. 11). See also Adam (1989, p. 139).
97. Montague (2012, p. 200).
98. Browning (2004, p. 355).
99. Montague (2012, p. 201) and Hayes (2017, p. 122).
100. Montague (2012, p. 201). See also Breitman (1991, pp. 201–202) and Browning (2004, pp. 355–356).
101. Breitman (1991, p. 202) and Höss (2001, pp. 124, 146, 185).
102. Naumann (1966, pp. 167–168, 284).
103. Quoted in Berenbaum (1997, p. 184).
104. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, pp. 178–179).
105. Wellers (1993b, pp. 206–207).
106. Höss (2001, pp. 146–147).
107. Höss (2001, p. 146).
108. Hayes (2017, p. 123).
109. Höss (2001, p. 147).
110. Quoted in van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 293).
111. Barnard (1958, pp. 168–169).
112. Piper (1998, p. 158).
113. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 178).
114. Pressac and van Pelt (1998, p. 209).
115. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 293).
116. Wellers (1993a, p. 146).
117. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 293).
118. Pressac and van Pelt (1998, p. 189).
119. Most of Operation 14f13's 20,000 victims were gassed in the T4 facilities at Sonnenstein, Bernburg, and Hartheim (Hayes 2017, p. 120).
120. Adam (1989, p. 153).
121. Pingel (1993, p. 183).
122. Pressac and van Pelt (1998, p. 198).

123. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 271).
124. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 177). During the fall of 1940 (therefore before Bischoff arrived at Auschwitz), a second incinerator had been ordered because of concerns over Auschwitz I's rising death rate (van Pelt and Dwork 1996, p. 177).
125. Pressac and van Pelt (1998, p. 199) and van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 269).
126. Pressac and van Pelt (1998, p. 199).
127. Pressac and van Pelt (1998, p. 200).
128. Browning (1985, p. 37).
129. A premature decision (or even "Führer wish") to exterminate European Jewry could (and probably did) stimulate the search for a means that made such a goal possible. But until that means was found—*and it may never have been*—that decision or wish was and would remain impotent.
130. Breitman (2000, p. 75). See also Kwiet (1993, p. 88). It is important to note that some shooting squad leaders expressed an interest in saving the Jews, not because of the psychological difficulty associated with the killings, but because (much like the Nazi "productionists" in the ghettos) they believed that killing the Jews wasted a valuable source of slave labor (Longerich 2005, p. 211). Certain influential members of the Wehrmacht, and later the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories, expressed similar concerns (Breitman 1991, pp. 216–217; Breitman 2000, pp. 81, 85; Lower 2002, pp. 8–9). Of course, this reasoning may have been relied on because it also offered an excuse to not undertake the mass shootings.
131. Quoted in Rhodes (2002, p. 227). See also Höss (2001, p. 208).
132. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 60).
133. Naumann (1966, p. xxvii).
134. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 46).
135. This is according to the diary of Wehrmacht soldier Richard Heidenreich, dated 5 October 1941 (quoted in Heer 1997, p. 84). See also Longerich (2010, p. 225).
136. Kwiet (1998, p. 18).
137. Kwiet (1998, p. 17).
138. Streit (1994, p. 108).
139. Streit (1994, p. 108).
140. Headland (1989, pp. 401–412, as cited in Browning 1995, p. 100).
141. Gerlach (1998, p. 58, as cited in Matthäus 2004, p. 260).
142. As Alfred Filbert of Einsatzkommando 9 said, "in the first instance, without a doubt, the executions were limited generally to Jewish males" (quoted in Goldhagen 1996, pp. 149–150).
143. Streit (1994, p. 108).
144. Hilberg (1980, p. 93).

145. Friedländer (2007, p. 240).
146. Bloxham and Kushner (2005, p. 136).
147. Matthäus (2007, p. 224).
148. Musmanno (1961, p. 133). Then again, some Nazis like Eckmann and Ohlendorf said that they would have shot their parents if given a Führer order (Arendt 1984, p. 42; Musmanno 1961, p. 120). Interestingly, when Seibert answered the judge's question, Ohlendorf and the other defendants were furious with him: Even though he was being honest, he (presumably as they had) should have lied because his truthfulness had just undermined their only defense.

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CHAPTER 5

Operation Barbarossa and the Holocaust by Bullets—Bottom-Up Forces

Having examined the top-down forces the SS leadership exerted on the extermination campaign, this chapter explores the bottom-up forces generated by those in the killing field. What becomes apparent is when managers and their functionaries work within an organizational process, they typically move toward "improving" an initially rudimentary system, much like Milgram and Williams did during the Obedience studies. With increasing experience over time—*past history*—some innovators add efficiencies and eliminate inefficiencies, which helps advance the organizational system in the desired direction. As we shall see, during the Nazi regime's pursuit of the Holocaust by bullets, many of these kinds of innovations focused on making the act of killing with guns *both* more efficient and sufficiently palatable for the German executioners. In this, I would argue, the Holocaust by bullets resembles Milgram's pilot studies where participants invented their own strain resolving coping mechanisms from the bottom-up, for example, avoidance behaviors where they purposefully looked away from the learner. These kinds of bottom-up innovations made what Milgram wanted psychologically easier (less stressful) for the participants to engage in. Likewise, on the Eastern front the easier the participation in harm doing became psychologically, the greater the proportion of ordinary Germans willing to partake in the infliction of harm. And the longer these Germans continued to participate, the greater the devastation. As this and the remaining chapters demonstrate, the more attention one pays to the strain resolving power

of the means of inflicting harm, the clearer the internal logic behind the Nazis' machinery of destruction becomes.

As I showed in the previous chapter, although Himmler and his commanders did all they could to ensure their men did what they wanted, mere words and orders could not eliminate the intense perceptual experience of shooting unarmed civilians at close range. As this chapter will show, squad commanders and executioners alike soon realized that if they wanted to avoid mental breakdowns, *they* would have to find their own more effective ways of relieving themselves of the "burdening of the soul." This is the kind of situation where, as Bauman argues, from the bottom-up, "bureaucracy picks up where visionaries stop."[1]

Although "Every…squad had its preferred methods,"[2] after "lessons learned,"[3] certain innovators in the field discovered a series of less stressful and more efficient ways to shoot civilians. And after regular meetings "to debate the most efficient methods"[4] and "frequent information exchanges,"[5] the most effective of these ideas spread to other squads. What follows is a very general big-picture overview of the transition from the earliest (rudimentary) inefficient and strain inducing shooting techniques to the emergence of the most efficient and popular strain resolving "one best way" of shooting civilians *en masse*. To gain a basic overview of what took place, we must briefly return to the start of Operation Barbarossa and the first mass shooting undertaken by Einsatzkommando Tilsit.

The First Executions

Einsatzkommando Tilsit's first execution in Gargždai on 24 June differed from the early Polish executions in important ways. First, before the mass shooting, Tilsit's men searched for an existing burial site—perhaps a hill-shaped land formation, ravine, or in their case, a tank trap. Second, victims were instructed to stand on the grave's edge and were then shot, so that most would fall into the pit. As a result, their bodies quickly and conveniently disappeared from the shooters' sight.[6] Because the shooters did not have to dig the grave and then drag all the bodies into it, they avoided significant physical labor (efficiency) and did not have to touch the bodies or see the unsettling wounds they had just inflicted on defenseless civilians.[7] Finally, this more efficient technique allowed the men to more effectively separate cause (pulling the trigger) from effect (killing). After the shootings, the executioners quickly filled in the graves and moved on. To save themselves the effort of having to

search for a burial site, an even more efficient approach was to force the victims or locals requisitioned from the community to dig graves.[8] For a photograph showing Lithuanian Jews forced by Germans to dig a grave pit in 1941, see https://dachaujacket.omeka.net/exhibits/show/photos/item/4602. Clearly, these new innovations first emerged at some point between the first executions of civilians during the Polish invasion and the start of Operation Barbarossa.[9]

After the men from Einsatzkommando Tilsit had secured a burial site, the condemned were instructed to walk toward the tank trap. On arrival.

> A group of ten men was forced to take up position at the edge of the pit *with their faces turned toward the execution commando*. The twenty-man strong firing party stood at a distance of twenty meters from the pit's edge. Two marksmen aimed their rifles at one victim, an SS officer gave the order to shoot. After each round a new group was driven to the edge of the pit and forced to push into it any corpses that had not fallen in on their own. [italics added][10]

Despite all these innovations, perhaps having to look at the facial expressions of people in their last moments resulted in some executioners showing signs of "burdening of the soul" and succumbing "to feelings of nausea and nervous tension…."[11]

One of the earliest and more popular strain resolving techniques for dealing with this stress was to consume alcohol.

> In Gargždai, Kretinga and Palanga, coveted schnapps rations were distributed [to the Tilsit executioners] following each *Judenaktion*, […] Killing orders issued in July 1941 instructed the SS and Police commanders to ensure that members of the execution commandos came to no harm. Within the framework of *seelische Betreuung* (pastoral care), social get-togethers in the evenings as well as excursions…took place in order to wipe out the impressions of the day.[12]

As Hilberg observes, most of the shooting squad members "were drunk most of the time—only the 'idealists' refrained from the use of alcohol."[13] Alcohol was rationed by commanding officers and became a central part of the extermination process for some squads. For example, because the mass shootings were associated with a decline in squad morale, Alfred Filbert of Einsatzkommando 9 thought it wise to issue his men with increasing rations of vodka.[14]

Elsewhere, Einsatzgruppe C relied on a similar yet more proximate shooting technique to Tilsit during its first executions. As one shooter noted, "In Rovno I had to participate in the first shooting… Each member of the firing-squad had to shoot one person. We were instructed to aim at the head from a distance of about ten metres."[15] After firing at about five people, this squad member stopped due to "nervous strain…."[16] To alleviate this strain, the method of shooting was changed: Several shooters were tasked with firing at each victim. On 12 July 1941, Einsatzkommando member Felix Landau noted in his diary a problem with the multiple-shooter-per-victim technique. "Six of us had to shoot them. The job was assigned thus: three at the heart, three at the head. I took the heart. The shots were fired and the brains whizzed through the air. Two in the head is too much. They almost tear it off."[17] Although this shooting technique produced a disturbing visual spectacle, many commanders, like Ohlendorf from Einsatzgruppe D, initially preferred it because it helped to "avoid any individual having to take direct, personal responsibility."[18]

The general passivity with which many, though certainly not all, Jews went to their deaths may also have aided in reducing the perceptual intensity of what would otherwise have been for their executioners a much more emotionally disturbing task. A Wehrmacht cadet officer based in Ukraine wrote in August 1941.

> What struck me particularly was the calmness and discipline of these [Jewish] people. […] The marksmen were members of the SS. On the orders of a superior they fired shots at the heads of these people with their carbines. […] Sometimes the tops of their skulls flew up into the air. […] The people who were to be shot walked towards this grave as though they were taking part in a procession. […] They went composed and quietly to their deaths. I saw only two women weep the whole time I observed such executions. I found it simply inexplicable.[19]

Was this cadet trying to "blame the victims" for not resisting?[20] Other witnesses, like Alfred Metzner, suggested that some Jews even went to the trouble of reducing the stressful nature of the executioners' task by going to their deaths in an orderly—some might say considerate—manner. "It was amazing…how the Jews stepped into the graves, with only mutual condolences in order to strengthen their spirits and in order to ease the work of the execution commandos."[21] Why did the victims

behave this way? Perhaps on realizing that escape was near impossible, facilitating a carefully aimed and immediately lethal (painless?) shot was surely preferable to a slower death associated with resisting.[22] Complying with, and thereby accommodating, an irrational goal like mass extermination made some rational sense.

"Gypsies" (Roma), however, who as *Untermenschen* were also targeted during the Soviet campaign, frequently caused greater difficulties for German shooting squads. As Lieutenant Colonel Walther stated,

> Shooting the Jews is easier than shooting the gypsies [*sic*]. I have to admit that the Jews are very composed as they go to their death—they stand very calmly—while the gypsies [*sic*] wail and scream and move about constantly when they are already standing at the execution site.[23]

But it was the mentally ill who put up the greatest resistance. After Stahlecker's destructive Einsatzgruppe A shot 748 mentally ill Lithuanians in October 1941 because they were apparently a "danger" to security, the Wehrmacht asked them to repeat the exercise at a similar institution. Stahlecker refused to repeat the exercise, arguing to Himmler that if the Wehrmacht deemed such dirty work so necessary then they should do it themselves.[24] What Stahlecker and his men had discovered was that mentally institutionalized people typically refused to follow the instructions of those who intended to kill them and, as a result, they frequently became hysterical. The ensuing panic made the targets difficult to kill with one shot (thus greatly heightening and prolonging the perpetrators' stress). Even Jäger's prolific Einsatzkommando 3 had, by 1 February 1942, only managed to shoot 653 mentally ill patients out of a total of 138,272 victims (100,000 of whom were women and children).[25] Other commanders, including Nebe, encountered similar difficulties.[26] After Germans encountered such experiences, the mentally ill were no longer categorized as a "danger" to security, and their execution by firing squad was no longer deemed a priority. The prospective victim pool contracted, and attention shifted to target categories such as Jews, who generated less "burdening of the soul." The irony of the resistance of the mentally ill and the passivity of the "normal" Jews are highlighted in the existing literature. For example, after Einsatzkommando 5 had shot a group of mentally ill patients in Kiev, the men experienced what they termed an accompanying "heavy mental burden."[27] Headland has drawn attention to the apparently "twisted thinking of these men."

It was "much easier to kill people who were sane."[28] Only the inherently irrational, it seems, were equipped with an effective strategy capable of subverting the increasingly rationalized goal of mass extermination. But it would not last. Despite Einsatzgruppe A's unwillingness to kill the mentally ill, Himmler knew of some specialists who would.

> At the request of the Wehrmacht, Himmler decided on 4 October…that Sonderkommando Lange [and his]…gassing vehicles, should be brought by plane to Novgorod in order to kill patients in three psychiatric hospitals there, because the accommodation was urgently needed for troops.[29]

Despite the strain resolving mechanisms they had developed, the executioners and their squad leaders could still not avoid seeing their victims close-up just before and during the shootings. Bauman suggests that the shooters tried to distance themselves as far as possible from their civilian targets.[30] This strategy, however, created a problem of its own: Less accurate shooting resulted in wounded or in some cases, unwounded civilians falling into the graves with the dead. After the shootings, these victims were buried alive. Some would then try to claw their way out of the graves. But Nazi commanders soon demanded changes. One SS-Commissioner-General complained in a letter to the Reich Minister,

> Peace and order cannot be maintained in White Ruthenia with methods of that sort. To bury seriously wounded people alive who worked their way out of their graves again, is such a base and filthy act that this incident as such should be reported to the Führer and Reichsmarschall.[31]

The firing squads' accuracy had to be improved. But to do so the shooters *had to move closer* to the civilians, but the closer they got, the more they could see and hear them thus intensifying the psychological burden. It was a dilemma. Many years later, a Vietnam Special Forces veteran related his own similar experiences to Grossman. "'When you get up close and personal,' he drawled with a cud of chewing tobacco in his cheek, 'where you can hear 'em scream and see 'em die,' and here he spit[s] tobacco for emphasis, 'it's a bitch.'"[32] Because Jews were defenseless and often acquiescent civilians, the Germans had opportunities to manipulate their victims in ways that the Vietnam veteran could not. To maximize accuracy, the executioners had to see exactly where they were shooting. One new technique used to alleviate the psychological strain

associated with the shootings was to have victims turn their backs to the shooters, thus enabling the shooters to avoid any eye contact or see the fearful expressions on their faces. One photo illustrating the German's reliance on this shooting technique taken sometime during the first three months of the Soviet invasion shows at least four men kneeling over the edge of a ditch with a larger number of executioners shooting at the back of their heads from a distance of less than five meters: See https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa19151. In Grossman's words,

> The eyes are the window of the soul, and if one does not have to look into the eyes when killing, it is much easier to deny the humanity of the victim. The eyes bulging out 'like prawns' and blood shooting out of the mouth are not seen. The victim remains faceless, and one never needs to know one's victim as a person. And the price most killers have to pay for a close-range kill—the memory of the 'face terrible, twisted in pain and hate, yes such hate'—this price need never be paid if we can simply avoid looking at our victim's face.[33]

Also, because with this shooting technique the victims faced away from their executioners, they were less directly forced to hear any crying or screaming. Having the victims kneel instead of stand lowered their center of gravity over the precipice. Thus, upon being shot, they were more likely to fall forward into the grave below. The risk of Germans later having to push (and thus touch) any victims who failed to fall into the grave was reduced.[34] A final slight strain resolving innovation was the introduction of "rotating firing squads," which dispersed the distasteful task across an entire squad.[35] As Browning argues, this generated enormous pressure on all rank and file members to do their fair share of the dirty work.[36] It should also be kept in mind that because these Germans stood in potentially hostile enemy territory where all Germans depended on one another for their safety, failing to shoot one's fair share of the victims risked losing their comrade's goodwill.[37] When contemplating the potential consequences of losing this goodwill, many Germans perceived their decision to shoot over refusing to do so as the lesser of two evils.[38] Even if a shooter simply proved psychologically incapable of continuing to undertake the executions—thus failing to do their fair share—most important of all was that they demonstrated to their fellow comrades that they at least tried to help out. This intense pressure to participate in the executions, however, only ended up implicating the vast majority of Germans. With nearly all guilty of having killed at least some civilians,

none of course would ever be in a position to critique the massacres or their fellows' decision to take part in them.[39]

The shooting method of having the victims kneel and turn away, how-ever, was also not without its problems. For example, sometimes victims' skulls would shatter when struck by bullets from close range—a sight the shooters were unable to avoid.[40] To eliminate problems like this, the neck shot emerged as the "recommended shooting technique…."[41] The neck shot required that the victim turn away from the executioner or lie facedown on the ground. Then, from point-blank range, the shooter fired a single shot into the nape of the neck (just above the shoulders). The bullet would enter the back of the neck, producing a small entrance wound and, on severing the victim's spinal cord, kill instantly. With the neck shot, executioners could avoid seeing the larger exit wound. Compared to earlier shooting tech-niques, the neck shot was un-survivable and clean, and because it resulted in instant death, many Germans perceived it as a more humane way of killing.[42] For a photo showing a member of Ohlendorf's Einsatzgruppe D relying on this shooting technique, see https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa5355. This photo also suggests that Ohlendorf's early prefer-ence for the multiple-shooter-per-victim technique was eventually eclipsed by the more popular neck shot. For another photograph, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Einsatzkommando#/media/File:Einsatzgruppen_or_their_auxiliaries_-_Kovno_1942.jpg. The neck shot shooting technique likely made it easier for a larger proportion of ordinary Germans to do their fair share of the dirty work.

With fewer psychologically fragile perpetrators and, thus, a larger number of capable ordinary Germans involved in the killings, ambitious leaders in the field continued to seek out more efficient innovations. Probably the most significant development in this direction was Higher SS/Police Leader Friedrich Jeckeln's "Sardinenpackung" method, which developed fairly early in the Soviet campaign near the end of July 1941. August Meier, a "minor bureaucrat," describes the technique.

> I still particularly recall an *Aktion* in Schepetovka which stands out in my mind as extraordinarily gruesome. It involved about a hundred people. Women and children were among those shot. Jeckeln said: 'Today we'll stack them like sardines.' The Jews had to lie layer upon layer in an open grave and were then killed with neck shots from machine pistols, pistols and rifles. That meant they had to lie face down on those previously shot [whereas] in other executions they were shot standing up and fell into the grave or were dragged in. […] I don't know if Jeckeln did any shooting, but I don't believe so.[43]

As Helmut Langerbein observes, Jeckeln's rationale behind this technique was, because the victims stacked themselves, the perpetrators not only maximized usage of the typically limited grave space, they also avoided "the added post-execution work of layering bodies…."[44] As we shall see, with more time and greater experience, this stacking technique inadvertently generated other advantages that enormously increased killing efficiency.

About a month into the Soviet campaign, the Wehrmacht expressed concerns about a sudden influx of Jewish refugees from Hungary into the Ukrainian city of Kamianets-Podilskyi. A Wehrmacht official believed the refugees were too difficult to feed and also posed a "danger of [spreading an] epidemic…."[45] In late August, Jeckeln announced his solution to this problem: By 1 September 1941 he would liquidate them. Jeckeln knew he could not undertake such a massive operation with just his own men, so he organized for other units to converge on the small township. He flew in especially to lead the action, and on the first day, he observed from a nearby hill the mass shooting of 4200 men, women, and children. On the second day, over 11,000 civilians were killed. A total of 23,600 victims had been shot by the massacre's end.[46] Jeckeln, who on 12 August had been ordered to report to Himmler about his brigade's "lack of 'activity',"[47] radioed Berlin with his body count statistics. According to Dieter Pohl, this late August massacre was "the largest of its kind and signaled a turning point in the Holocaust—a break from killing targeted groups of mostly Jewish males to the indiscriminate murder of entire Jewish communities."[48] Indeed, the massacre brought "Jeckeln the accolades that he had hoped for from his superior."[49] During the month of August 1941, Jeckeln's Kommandostab SS Brigade One, which Breitman notes was not "part of a political-ideological elite"[50] (more moderately antisemitic?), had shot 44,125 civilians in Western Ukraine.[51] This figure exceeded that of all other police units.[52] It was from this point on that the "curve of murder statistics" soared.

In terms of the broader military campaign in the East, September 1941 was a particularly good month for the Wehrmacht.

> …Leningrad was successfully cut off in early September. The Ukrainian campaign that Hitler imposed on his reluctant generals quickly followed. On September 12 Ewald von Kleist's tanks broke through the Soviet lines behind Kiev. On the same day German forces cracked the defensive perimeter around Leningrad. In the words of Alan Clark, this day could be "reckoned the low point in the fortunes of the Red Army for the whole war." By September 16 Kleist had joined up with Heinz Guderian at

> Lokhvista to complete the vast Kiev encirclement. By September 26 Kiev had fallen and 665,000 Soviet prisoners had been taken.[53]

With the Soviet Union at such a low point, Hitler sensed that total control of Europe would soon be his. In the "euphoria of victory,"[54] Hitler, brimming with confidence, suddenly reversed his earlier decision not to expel the German Jews unable or unwilling to leave the Reich.[55] Hitler's decision may also have been influenced by Karl Kaufmann, the Gauleiter of Hamburg, who in September apparently asked the Führer if he would deport Germany's Jews so that their apartments could be used to house Germans whose homes had been destroyed by British bombing raids[56]—bombings Nazi propaganda blamed the Jews for.[57] Whatever the reason behind this change, Hitler's decision (as we shall soon see) sparked Eichmann, the so-called Nazi's people mover, into sudden activity. Because, as shown, most Germans benefited financially and materially from the Nazi military victories, perhaps the Nazi labor minister's demand around September 1941 that the pension gap between white- and blue-collar (Aryan) Germans be narrowed is unsurprising.[58] A month later and with more military successes, on 4 October 1942 Göring was the bearer of more good news for Germany: "From this day on things will continue to get better since we now possess huge stretches of fertile land. There are stocks of eggs, butter, and flour there that you cannot even imagine."[59] Not publicly discussed, of course, was what diverting this food bonanza to Germany and its armed forces meant for those living in and around these fertile lands. A month before Göring's good news, in August 1942 Erich Koch (Reich Commissioner for Ukraine) had already cemented his food policy guidelines, stating:

> Ukraine is required to provide everything Germany lacks. This requirement is to be fulfilled without regard to casualties …. The increase in bread rations is a political necessity crucial to our ability to pursue the war to its victorious conclusion. The grain we lack must be extracted from Ukraine. In light of this task, feeding the civilian population there is utterly insignificant.[60]

As the Wehrmacht continued to push further into the Soviet interior, not far behind came Jeckeln efficiently executing unusually large numbers of Jews. In early September, Jeckeln's HSSPF Russia South shot 4144 Jews in the Ukrainian township of Berdychiv.[61] A week or so later,

his men, accompanied by Police Battalion 45, killed another 12,000 Jews. Most of the victims were women, children, and the elderly.[62] Wherever body counts were unusually high, Jeckeln could be found. The secret behind Jeckeln's ability to rapidly wipe out entire communities was the advancing organizational process he attached to his "Sardinenpackung" shooting technique.

The Bureaucratized Mass Shooting Process: Babi Yar

On 19 September 1941, an advanced party from Paul Blobel's Sonderkommando 4a (Einsatzgruppe C) arrived in Kiev.[63] The city was home to Ukraine's largest Jewish population. At a meeting between Jeckeln, Blobel, and Kurt Eberhard, Jeckeln set his sights on eliminating Kiev's entire Jewish population and arranged for other units, including some Ukrainian auxiliaries, to help with the task.[64] Soon after, announcements on the streets of Kiev instructed all members of the Jewish community to meet at 8 a.m. on 29 September at a particular downtown location. All Jews were to bring official documents, warm clothing, linen, and any valuables. Those who failed to show up would be hunted down and shot. On the appointed day, a large crowd gathered. German and Ukrainian forces arranged them into a purposefully staggered line. Then, according to eyewitness Sergei Ivanovich Lutzenko, "in tight columns of one hundred each" the Jews "were marched to the adjoining Babi Yar" ravine.[65] Another account by Lev Ozerov notes that at Babi Yar "an entire office operation with desks had been set up…."[66] A truck driver named Höfer describes what he saw:

> The Ukrainians led them past a number of different places where one after the other they had to remove their luggage, then their coats, shoes and overgarments and also underwear. They also had to leave their valuables in a designated place. There was a special pile for each article of clothing. It all happened very quickly and anyone who hesitated was kicked or pushed by the Ukrainians to keep them moving.[67]

Removing the victims' clothing before shooting them generated two main advantages: the clothes could later be sold on for profit and, in terms of control, earlier executions confirmed that naked victims were less likely to make a run for it.[68] The Babi Yar ravine,

was about 150 metres long, 30 metres wide and a good 15 metres deep.
Two or three narrow entrances led to this ravine through which the Jews
were channeled. When they reached the bottom of the ravine they were
seized by members of the Schutzpolizei and made to lie down on top of
the Jews who had already been shot. This all happened very quickly. The
corpses were literally in layers. […] When the Jews reached the ravine they
were so shocked by the horrifying scene that they completely lost their
will. It may even have been that the Jews themselves lay down in rows to
wait to be shot. […] there was a 'packer' at either entrance to the ravine.
These 'packers' were Schutzpolizisten, whose job it was to lay the vic-
tim on top of the other corpses so that all the marksman had to do as he
passed was fire a shot.[69]

The packers helped to ease the psychological burden on the shooters by
ensuring victims were facedown and thus faceless, robbing them of their
individuality.[70] There were so many people to kill that the shootings con-
tinued until darkness, with the action resuming at first light the follow-
ing morning.[71] Paul Blobel divided his men into groups of 30, with each
group spending an hour each on shooting duties.[72] With specialist con-
tributors who collected clothing and valuables, channeled victims into
the ravine, and "packed" the victims to await the arrival of the marks-
men who shot them, Jeckeln had developed a bureaucratized, assem-
bly-line process of mass murder. With more civilians killed in less time,
this massacre overshadows that in Kamianets-Podilskyi. Despite Jeckeln's
record-breaking feat, his report to Berlin tersely noted, "Special com-
mando 4a, together with Einsatzgruppe C Headquarters and two com-
mando groups of the South Police Regiments, executed 33,771 Jews in
Kiev on 29 and 30 September 1941."[73]

At the same time that Nebe and Fritzsch were undertaking their gas-
sing experiments, Jeckeln's application of means-to-end formal rationality
enabled him to destroy a greater number of civilians than any other unit
yet. A secret official report noted at the time that the key to this stagger-
ing result was Jeckeln's application of some "extremely clever organiza-
tion" to overcome the usual "difficulties resulting from such a large-scale
action."[74] As Yaacov Lozowick observes, "It seems no accident that the
orderly, well-planned murder of 33,000 Jews took place at Kiev at the
end of this period, rather than at Lvov near the beginning."[75] Much like
Milgram would later do at Yale during his pilot studies, project manager
Jeckeln also gradually and systematically refined his procedure of harm

infliction. And with more time, Jeckeln's "factory-orientated approach"[76] underwent further refinements; the division of labor increased with ever more specialist functionaries performing ever more refined specialist tasks, including a reliance on specialist shooters who were willing and capable of doing more than their fair share of the dirty work.[77] At a mass shooting eight weeks after the Babi Yar massacre,

> In the pits…there were to be only a few active marksmen, each of whom used a machine pistol set on single shot. Walking over his victims, a "shooter" could fire fifty shots and then receive a new magazine from a comrade whose sole responsibility was refilling cartridges […] After a number of magazines, the marksmen would take a break. Row after row, marching block after marching block was to be killed in this manner, in accordance with Jeckeln's minutely worked out method….[78]

Thus, as Angrick and Klein put it, with time and increasing experience Jeckeln came to prefer deploying in the pits "a small circle of truly emotionless SS men," "primarily his 'old' men…who had 'already done' something like this" at earlier executions.[79] Still, due to the highly stressful nature of such work, Jeckeln felt it was necessary to rotate with "additional men for the relief…."[80]

Because, during the campaign, Jeckeln received the aid of various military units—Wehrmacht regiments, Einsatzkommando units, Police battalions, and Ukrainian auxiliary forces—his "one best way" of massacring civilians soon spread elsewhere. If Germans in the armed forces decided in the future to deploy Jeckeln's "controlled" shooting process—and as we shall see, they did—"calculable" and highly "efficient" results of around 15,000 people killed per day became "predictable." Jeckeln's inherently bureaucratic mass shooting process advanced all four components of a formally rational system.[81] It is Jeckeln's process (along with the innovations by other contributors, like Einsatzkommando 3's Karl Jäger) that best explains the rising curve of murder statistics in the Soviet interior after mid-August 1941. And Jeckeln's increasingly bureaucratized shooting process—with its division of labor, specialization of labor, clear responsibilities, written records, rules and procedures, impersonality of relations—could do so because as Weber argues,

> The decisive reason for the advance of bureaucratic organization has always been its purely technical superiority over any other form of organization.

> The fully developed bureaucratic mechanism compares with other organizations exactly as does the machine with the non-mechanical modes of production.[82]

I therefore challenge the so-called de-bureaucratization argument during the Holocaust by bullets.[83] In fact, the rational evolution of the execution process and the record-breaking Babi Yar massacre in particular can, I believe, be described more precisely as a modern bureaucratic process.

Despite the increased bureaucratization, an earlier problem persisted. Even some of the "ordinary" executioners, who after several months of killing had risen to the top of Himmler's shooter attrition process, were still in need of, as Jeckeln put it, "relief…." For example, Kurt Werner, a marksman at the Babi Yar massacre, admitted after that, "It's almost impossible to imagine what nerves of steel it took to carry out that dirty work down there. It was horrible…."[84] Like the Obedience study's Mrs. Rosenblum, Werner only seems concerned about his pain. With a seemingly endless supply of Soviet Jews to kill, the question was how much longer could the most calloused of German killers like Werner keep it up? Shooting squad reports such as the one Jeckeln submitted to Berlin after Babi Yar rarely mention any psychological problems among the perpetrators. However, as Headland noted earlier, officials were constantly aware of the issue and gave it a great deal of attention.[85] As Rudolf Höss said after the war,

> Many gruesome scenes are said to have taken place, people running away after being shot, the finishing off of the wounded and particularly of the women and children. Many members of the Einsatzkommando [Nazi shooting squads], unable to endure wading through blood any longer, had committed suicide. Some had even gone mad.[86]

In confirmation of much of this, in November 1941, lawyer Helmuth von Moltke wrote in a letter to his wife that at least one hospital existed "where SS men are cared for who have broken down while executing women and children."[87] A Wehrmacht neuropsychiatrist who treated many of those affected believed that about 20% of men suffered from psychological disorders associated with the shootings.[88] Even those German executioners who did not break down, as Annette Schücking, a female aid based in the East, reported, "all had an intense need to talk."[89]

Despite the ongoing psychological problems, Jeckeln still proved capable of obtaining high body counts. Perhaps this is why on 10 October 1941, Heydrich mused about deporting Germany's Jews to new camps in Einsatzgruppe C's area of operations in Ukraine.[90] It is no coincidence that Einsatzgruppe C happened to fall under Jeckeln's umbrella of control.[91] Indeed, a week later, on 18 October, after meeting with the General Government's SS and Police Leader Friedrich-Wilhelm Krüger and the previously mentioned Odilo Globocnik, Himmler ordered the cessation of Jewish emigration.[92] Himmler would now be in charge of when the Reich Jews would leave Germany and where they would be sent. In reaction to Hitler's earlier decision during the September "euphoria of victory," around mid-October the RSHA (Eichmann) started organizing trains packed with German and Austrian Jews (from cities including Berlin, Munich, Frankfurt, Vienna, and Breslau) to start rolling east. However, somewhat mysteriously, the plan to send German Jews to Ukraine was soon dropped. Instead, these trains were redirected to Minsk (Belarus), Kaunas/Kovno (Lithuania), Riga (Latvia), and, most proximately, Lódź (Poland). In the German university town of Göttingen, locals—presumably victims of British air raids—reacted to this news by "flooding" the NSDAP district office with applications for the soon-to-be-vacated Jewish apartments.[93] Because these German Jews were limited to leaving with no more than 50 kilograms of luggage,[94] the household effects they had to leave behind—furnishings, appliances, textiles, and such—were passed on to "deserving" Germans.[95]

The deportation of trainloads of these Western Jews to various eastern cities signaled significant movement in the Nazi regime's solution to the "Jewish question." Eichmann, the SS's people-moving expert, knew that if the SS was to succeed, it would need to draw on the expertise, resources, and support of other German governmental agencies. But doing so would require that the usually secretive SS discloses its intentions to others. With such cooperation in mind, on 29 November Eichmann sent invitations on Heydrich's behalf to almost a score of mostly high-ranking civil servants from certain government agencies, for example, the Transportation Ministry. The meeting, scheduled for 9 December, has become known as the Wannsee Conference.[96] Heydrich attached to the invitations a 31 July 1941 mandate from Göring[97] that reinforced that he (Heydrich) had total control over resolving the Jewish question,[98] and therefore, all invitees were to cede to his needs. Those

invited were the people whose acquiescence Heydrich would demand, and whose help and resources Eichmann would need, to resolve once and for all the persistent and expanding "Jewish question." And it was at this meeting that a new plan would be revealed.

But soon after the invitations were sent out, Germany was struck by several significant blows on the military front lines. First, in the Soviet interior, the onset of winter from about November 1941 saw the Nazi war machine grind (freeze?) to a halt. Then, beginning on 5 December the Soviets managed to muster a forceful counteroffensive. Germany's lightening victory over the Soviets would not come as easily as Hitler had so confidently anticipated. The resumption of the successful march to victory would have to await the spring thaw. The second and immediately more disconcerting blow to the German military came just a few days later on 7 December 1941 when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor—an act which caused the USA to declare war on Japan. Due to the Axis Pact between Italy, Japan, and Germany, the USA's declaration of war against Japan required Germany to declare war against the USA. If the USA could free itself from a predictably difficult campaign against the Japanese in the Pacific, the already stretched Nazi war machine would face, on multiple front lines, a new, highly industrialized, and no doubt awesome foe.

In response to these military setbacks, on 12 December 1941, Hitler, according to Goebbels' diary, "decided to make a clean sweep [of the Jews]."[99] An entry in Himmler's diary, dated 18 December, confirms that around this point in time the policy toward all Jews changed. "Jewish question | exterminate as partisans."[100] For the previous six months, Soviet Jews had been the targets of genocidal actions, so this statement was obviously not specifically directed at them. Powerful Jews in the Reich, Europe, and America were, as far as Hitler was concerned, behind Germany's recent military setbacks.[101] All such groups, at least those within reach, would now pay the price.

But *how* exactly were all the Western Jews transported to the East to be killed? As shown, over the previous few months, a variety of trial-and-error experiments had taken place—some of which indicated strong signs of probable success. Still, as Hilberg argues,

> As of November 1941, there was some thinking about deporting Jews to the *Einsatzgruppen* so they could be killed by these experienced shooters. That is why German Jews were transported to Minsk, Riga, and Kovno.[102]

If so, why were most of these cities located in Einsatzgruppe A's north-western sphere and none in Jeckeln's southwestern territories? Put differently, why was the Nazi's most effective executioner being excluded from this tentative plan? The answer to this question is that he was not excluded—in mid-October 1941 Himmler decided to replace Hans-Adolf Prützmann (Higher SS and Police Leader of Northern Russia) with the far more "efficient" Jeckeln.[103] By November, Jeckeln, with his team intact, had relocated to the north (based in the Latvian capital of Riga).[104] According to his own testimony after the war, nearing mid-November Jeckeln received orders from Himmler for his first assignment: liquidate the 25,000–28,000 Latvian Jews in the Riga ghetto incapable of productive labor.[105] For this assignment, Jeckeln intended to apply his trusted "Kiev model…."[106] He settled on a site in a clearing in the Rumbuli forest about 10 kilometers south of Riga.[107]

On 25 November 1941, about 250 kilometers south of Riga, the first of the Reich Jews arrived on Eichmann's trains at the Lithuanian city of Kaunas. The nearly 3000 German Jews on board—mainly women and men and a small number of children—were met by Karl Jäger's efficient Einsatzkommando 3 and were soon after shot.[108] Back in Riga, on 30 November Jeckeln implemented his plan to liquidate the Latvian Jews in the Rumbuli forest. But the previous evening a train with 1000 Jews from Berlin arrived.[109] On his own initiative, Jeckeln decided to also kill the new arrivals first thing in the morning, instead of housing them in the recently vacated Riga ghetto as planned.[110] Einsatzgruppe A's Dr. Rudolf R. Lange (not to be confused with T4's Herbert Lange) tried to defy Jeckeln's decision. Lange not only stood up to Jeckeln but also informed both Heydrich and an immediately furious Himmler what was taking place. Himmler's order to Jeckeln that this particular trainload of Jews was not to be shot arrived too late—all were killed earlier in the day. It is not clear why Himmler wanted to save, for the meantime, this particular transport.[111] What is clear is that although many more trainloads of Western Jews soon followed, *most were not shot.* Instead, these Reich Jews were housed in the Lódź, Minsk, and Riga ghettos.[112] Indecision in the Eastern territories seems to have set in. As Browning notes, "In the last months of 1941, the total mass murder of the deported Reich Jews was clearly not yet being implemented."[113]

One explanation for the hesitancy is that the onset of winter made grave digging in the permafrost impossible.[114] This may be part of the answer, although such conditions did not seem to stop Jäger and

Jeckeln's winter massacres.[115] Much of this mystery must then be explained by the fact that the shooting squads were struggling with the increased psychological burden associated with having to shoot *Western* Jews. Wilhelm Kube, the Generalkommissar for White Ruthenia based in Minsk, highlighted the problem when he noticed that two young Jewish women from Germany appeared to have fully Aryan features. Although in the 1930s, he was rightfully described by one scholar as "an inveterate antisemite"[116]—and described Minsk Jews as "indigenous, animalistic hordes"[117]—it appears Kube developed strong second thoughts about the "Final Solution" when it came to shooting Jews from "our cultural milieu."[118] And until "a more discrete and 'humane' way" could be found, Kube refused to shoot Reich Jews.[119] Soon after, however, Heydrich overruled Kube's reluctance and these Western Jews were eventually shot. But of course, for those implementing these orders, if the most seasoned of German executioners struggled to kill every Eastern Jew placed before them, it is not difficult to imagine they faced heightened psychological difficulties when ordered to shoot civilians from the west who dressed, sounded, and sometimes looked much like themselves. Most of these Jews did not resemble the images promoted in Nazi propaganda: poor Eastern Jews whose impoverished appearances were a side effect of the wartime condition imposed on the ghettos by the Nazis themselves. Perhaps Jeckeln could find a solution. However, it appears the SS-Reichsführer was quickly losing faith in his chief executioner. At a meeting on 4 December, Himmler told Jeckeln:

> shooting is too complicated an operation…For shooting, he [Himmler] said, one needs people who can shoot, and…this affects people poorly, therefore Himmler said further, it would be best to liquidate the people by using gassing vehicles, which had been prepared in Germany according to his instructions, and that by using these gassing vehicles the troubles connected with shooting would fall to the wayside.[120]

For Jeckeln, more bad news followed. The day before this meeting Rudolf Lange was promoted to Chief of the KdS Latvia.[121]

Of course, it was from September 1941 Höss's Zyklon-B gassing technique and Nebe's gas van innovations held the potential to provide an apparently more "humane" means of killing civilians. By the time of the above meeting between Himmler and Jeckeln, the SS in Berlin had already placed an order with Prüfer from Topf & Sons for a

crematorium to be built in Mogilev (near Minsk),[122] which, according to Gerlach, they intended to combine with a gas chamber "not to kill the remaining local Jews but those of Western and Central Europe."[123] An extermination camp for Jews was being planned for Mogilev,[124] and since the German military had priority use over the Soviet railway, the emerging plan was to transport the Jews to the camp by boat along the Bug, Pripet, and Dnieper rivers.[125] In fact, in Mogilev, "Not only was a large crematorium ordered, but HSSPF Hamburg Rudolf Querner apparently also ordered large quantities of Zyklon-B gas from Tesch & Stabenow, and HSSPF Ostland in Riga [Jeckeln] expected this gas to be delivered."[126] If, indeed, Jeckeln supported this delivery of Zyklon-B to Mogilev, it would suggest that even he conceded that gassing was probably the more preferable means of killing Western Jews. The decision to use gassing technology in Minsk (stationary chamber) and gas vans in Riga on "Old Reich" Jews "not fit for work" can be traced to a letter written by Erhard Wetzel (racial advisor in the Eastern Ministry) to Hinrich Lohse (Reichskommissar for the Ostland) on 25 October 1941:

> ...[T4's Victor] Brack of the Führer's Chancellery has already declared himself willing to work on the production of the required accommodation as well as the gassing apparatus.[127]

Gas vans were indeed sent to Riga and parts for Prüfer's crematorium were delivered to Mogilev where they sat awaiting construction. Infrastructure along the waterways had been too badly damaged for boat transport, and as a result, in 1942 the plan was abandoned.[128]

Also important, by early December 1941, as Himmler spoke to Jeckeln, Nebe's gas vans had already started rolling off the production line and were being sent to the East. Therefore, as Himmler implied at this meeting, he no longer needed Jeckeln's specialist skill-set at the last link in the machinery of destruction. With other options on the horizon, the problematic shootings were no longer needed and Jeckeln's star role in Nazi Jewish policy was over. Pending the arrival of the vans, leaders like Kube passed on the usual shooting duties to their Latvian and Lithuanian collaborators.[129] Kube's solution actually highlights what, in the absence of the new killing technology, became the German executioners' most popular self-invented strain resolving coping mechanisms that reduced (eliminated?) their "burdening of the soul."

The Insertion of "[E]nd [S]pecial [U]nits"

From the start of the Soviet campaign, Himmler noticed that even without guns antisemitic Eastern Europeans still seemed far more eager than his own men to attack Jews. What more could he gain from arming them? It seems Himmler raised this possibility in Berlin during Hitler's 16 July 1941 "Garden of Eden" meeting; however, the Führer was adamant that Eastern Europeans should never be armed.[130] But, toward the end of that month, as his Kommandostab SS Cavalry Brigade desperately herded Jewish women and children into the shallow Pripet quicksands, Himmler disobeyed Hitler's order by copying the German security police's early July initiative to set up a battalion of Lithuanians and placing them under the control of Jäger's Einsatzkommando 3. On July 25, Himmler officially "authorized the creation of auxiliary police forces from the reliable non-Communist elements among Ukrainians, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Byelorussians."[131] He did so because, in his words, "the task of the police in the occupied eastern territories cannot be accomplished with the manpower of the police and SS now deployed or yet to be deployed."[132] However, as Breitman observes, the Eastern collaborators,

> and their future use as executioners reflected *more than just a shortage of German policemen*. Whereas Himmler, Daluege, Bach-Zelewski, and some other high officials had some concerns for the morale of German police, they did not much care what happened psychologically to the non-Germans as long as there were enough of them to carry out their appointed tasks. [italics added][133]

Simply increasing German manpower was unlikely to work, but Himmler suspected that augmenting Eastern European manpower might. Himmler's disobedience may, therefore, be explained by his suspicion that Eastern Europeans might make better executioners than ordinary Germans. By the end of 1941, 33,000 Eastern European collaborators had joined German extermination squads.[134] Six months later, the number had risen to 165,000, and by January 1943, it had almost doubled to 300,000.[135] However, simply arming large numbers of Eastern Europeans was, by itself, inadequate. In the spirit of Weberian formal rationality and means-to-end logic, the task at hand demanded meticulous organizational preparation.[136] Under the careful management of

German authorities, Eastern European collaborators were slotted in as the last link in the Nazis' shooting assembly line where they could efficiently perform their specialist labor.

A mass shooting undertaken in August 1941 in the Ukrainian village of Belaya Tserkov illustrates the kind of roles given to collaborators. After German soldiers shot all the men and women, and two of the boys, the rest of the children were held in a house without food or water until Ukrainian auxiliaries were brought in to shoot them. However, the Ukrainians left behind the 90 or so children under the age of seven—mainly toddlers and babies. According to Blobel's subordinate, August Häfner,

> …Blobel ordered me to have the children executed. I asked him, 'By whom should the shooting be carried out?' He answered, 'By the Waffen–SS.' I raised an objection and said, 'They are all young men. How are we going to answer to them if we make them shoot small children?' To this he said, 'Then use your men.' I then said, 'How can they do that? They have small children as well.' This tug-of-war lasted about ten minutes. […] I suggested that the Ukrainian militia of the Feldkommandant should shoot the children. There were no objections from either side to this suggestion.…[137]

Regarding the proposed execution site, Häfner continued,

> The Wehrmacht had already dug a grave. The children were brought along in a tractor. […] The Ukrainians were standing round trembling. The children were taken down from the tractor. They were lined up along the top of the grave and shot so that they fell into it. The Ukrainians did not aim at any particular part of the body. They fell into the grave. The wailing was indescribable. I shall never forget the scene throughout my life. I find it very hard to bear. […] Many children were hit four or five times before they died.[138]

Blobel, presumably having recovered from his mental breakdown a month earlier, clearly had no qualms about ordering the Ukrainians to undertake this mass execution. Perhaps unsurprisingly, however, he chose not to attend.

Eastern Europeans were increasingly given the tasks of shooting women and children, which Germans often shied away from.[139] As one member of Einsatzgruppe A stated,

> The orders for the third or fourth Einsatz were particularly important because they gave instructions for members of the local population to be used to carry out the actual dirty work, to which *end special units* should be set up. The purpose of this measure was to preserve the psychological equilibrium of our own people…. [italics added][140]

Although German supervisors and executioners may not have liked to admit it, the locals in these "end special units" (i.e., the last and most stressful link in the Nazi's destructive bureaucratic chain) were responsible for producing some of the bleakest statistics. For example, the Jäger report (which lists the deaths of over 130,000 civilians killed in under five months) states the massacres were undertaken by only eight to ten "reliable" Germans in "cooperation with Lithuanian partisans…."[141] As Matthäus said of the Lithuanians under Jäger's control, "these men contributed massively towards the staggering figure…."[142] MacQueen concludes that,

> Jager's "achievement" has to be considered largely as a triumph of managing the Lithuanian Schutzmannschaft forces (some 8000 men by the end of 1941) and the Lithuanian Police, without whom this deadly work would not have been remotely possible.[143]

In fact, during the liquidation of the Riga ghetto even Jeckeln trialed Jäger's most prized innovation when he supplemented his specialist German marksmen with a rapid rotation of Latvians. The rotation, however, did not last very long because most of the Latvians became too drunk to adequately perform their specialist role.[144]

It seems, then, that the most common strategy German authorities adopted to prevent members of their execution squads from becoming, in Bach-Zelewski words, "neurotics or savages," was one that shielded German perpetrators from all perceptual engagement. As a security police interpreter in Liepaja stated, "It was only in the early days that members of our section had to man the firing-squad. Later we had a Kommando of Latvians who made up the firing-squad."[145] The reason this strategy proved so popular among German troops is not hard to guess. Just as in Milgram's Peer Administers Shock condition, where an actor fulfilled the role of shock-inflictor, it enabled all Germans across the division of labor to make essential contributions to the overall process (victim capture, roundup, cordon duty, and so on) without feeling

(or appearing) personally responsible for the deadly outcome. This strategy powerfully promoted responsibility ambiguity among all Germans involved. As Wendy Lower put it, with the help of non-German shooters, "Even at the lowest level of the Nazi hierarchy, one could play one's part in the 'final solution' without dirtying one's hands…."[146]

The use of Ukrainians, Latvians, Lithuanians, and other collaborators at the killing-end of the assembly line (the most destructive of whom were, for obvious reasons, eagerly sought by the Germans outside their homelands as "end special units"[147]) raises another question. If the psychological strain generated by shooting civilians was as debilitating as many Germans attested after the war, why did these collaborators not experience comparable levels of strain and trauma? One possible reason may be, as Bauer noted earlier, that German perpetrators came from a mildly antisemitic society, while these collaborators were much more violently antisemitic. To ensure that the orders of those in Berlin were met, the Germans frequently required the help of those from certain Eastern European nations who had indisputable reputations for hating Jews and may have been more willing to act on such feelings. Another possible reason might be, as Jeckeln noted during his trial after the war, "Latvians were excellent for the job of murdering Jews, since they had strong nerves for executions of that sort."[148]

However, there is evidence that Eastern European collaborators struggled with the psychological burden of killing as much as anyone else, as their proclivity for drunkenness during executions suggests. But perhaps the strongest explanation is that in the wake of Operation Barbarossa, many Eastern European soldiers became prisoners of war and could only win release if they agreed to do the Germans' dirty work. And release meant they were less likely to die from starvation.[149] Again relying on the colonial management technique of favored natives obtaining privileges in exchange for controlling the others, as Göring himself said, the only non-Germans to be fed during the Soviet invasion were those "performing important tasks for Germany."[150] Many Eastern European "end special units," therefore, likely also struggled psychologically with the shootings, but continued to participate in a desperate effort to secure their own survival.

Whatever the numerous and no doubt overlapping reason(s) the Eastern collaborators had for participating, this kind of analysis only serves to draw attention away from the key instigators—the Germans.

Here Breitman draws attention back to the Nazi regime and its rational and creative bureaucrats,

> After the war Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski explained that the extermination camps arose because Germans and Central Europeans were not suited to be mass executioners. Stalin, he said, always had people to employ for this purpose—for example, the Latvians. Although the Nazis found some individuals to serve as killers, there was no collective eagerness to do so. The extermination camp…was something that the Russians could not accomplish: it reflected the German gift for organization. Bureaucrats created it, he concluded.[151]

CONCLUSION

In an attempt to ease the psychological burden of shooting civilians, the field leadership and their men introduced a variety of strain resolving coping mechanisms aimed at reducing the perceptual intensity of the mass shootings. These bottom-up techniques, including the consumption of alcohol, a focus on shooting the most compliant victims, evolving shooting techniques, and, after the bureaucratization of the shooting process, a dependence on Eastern European "end special units," powerfully aided the advance toward what Milgram would later term (perceptual) avoidance. This, in a nutshell, is how the German perpetrators coped with what Hilberg described as "weighty psychological obstacles and impediments," and over time helped them avoid becoming "neurotics" or "savages…."[152]

As the shooting squads' most effective strain resolving mechanisms spread, the body count grew, and the closer these men came to achieving the desires of their leaders far away in Berlin. As Lower points out, from the top-down Hitler, Himmler, and Heydrich defined and pushed in favor of the "final solution." Implementation, however, came through the bottom-up initiatives of those in the field in the lower and middling ranks.[153]

This process reminds us of Milgram's pilot studies where he decided to replace the translucent screen with a solid wall and, as a consequence, enhanced the psychological ability of a greater proportion of his participants to implement his top-down desires. Indeed, as mentioned, Milgram's idea to introduce a wall in the official experiments was instigated by his participants (thus from the bottom-up), who looked away

from the learner in order to make it psychologically easier for them to inflict more shocks.

"The primary question concerning the Holocaust as a crime based on the division of labor is…" according to Michael Allen, "[w]hat interrelationship existed between centralized authority and spontaneous initiative at the local level?"[154] A convincing answer to this question would seem to go a little further than the "rule of anticipated reactions," or what regional functionaries in the East themselves referred to as "anticipatory obedience."[155] The leadership set policy goals and upper-level field management (Jeckeln, Jäger, Ohlendorf, and their problem-solving ilk) discovered strain resolving and efficient techniques, the introduction of which was probably motivated by a mix of coercive pressure from the SS leadership, their own personal ambitions, and a desire to ensure their subordinates did not become "neurotics or savages."[156] Also, motivated by a desire to ease their own stress, sometimes the executioners contributed to the banalization of the shooting techniques. As the most directly involved perpetrators found their tasks psychologically more bearable, they were able to perform them longer and, as a result, came ever closer to achieving the desires of the leadership in Berlin.

Using the terminology of organizational theorists, the emergence of the sufficiently banal shooting techniques was of crucial importance because the less stressful the executions became, the more likely the German shooters could remain within their *Zone of Indifference*. And once able to remain within the *Zone of Indifference* and thereby having accepted their new destructive roles, then their creative internal rationalization machine—much as outlined by Albert Bandura's theory of moral disengagement—was able to exert "self-influence." The shooters would, for example, tell themselves and other Germans that they were, for example, fighting for the Reich's survival, and because Jews kept breaking the rules of occupation, all were—as Hitler and Himmler said from the start—"partisans" and "criminals" worthy only of death. The logical conclusion of all such rationales was the same: "what we are doing is necessary."[157] Of course, the German shooters had so much power over life and death decisions that nobody in the occupied territories could or would dare inform them that following the rules of occupation (like never leaving a barren ghetto) was in itself a death sentence that forced Jews to become "partisans" and "criminals."[158]

Crucial in making all this possible was the process of rationalization that saw the mass shootings become an increasingly bureaucratic process. As Bauman states,

> Once the objective had been set, everything went on exactly as Weber, with his usual clarity, spelled out: 'The "political master" finds himself in the position of the "dilettante" who stands opposite the "expert", facing the trained official who stands within the management of administration.' The objective had to be implemented; how this was to be done depended on the circumstances, always judged by the 'experts' from the point of view of feasibility and the cost of alternative opportunities of action.[159]

As subsequent chapters will show, advancing formal rationality where certain experts made the killing of civilians both more efficient and less offensive only continued, thus enabling the Holocaust to reach ever greater and more devastating heights.

Although the use of guns was labor intensive, involved complex logistics, and was hard to keep hidden from public view, with time and experience, it nonetheless proved capable of killing civilians on a horrendous scale. Despite an initially slow start to the shooting campaign, by the end of the war this method of extermination had killed about 25% of all Jewish Holocaust victims. The number of Roma (Gypsies) shot is not clear but likely numbered in the tens of thousands.[160] But as far as the leading Nazis were concerned, the major limitation of firearms was that their men were forced to witness an undeniable connection between their contributions and their lethal effects. The main shortcoming of guns was that they made many of the German executioners feel and appear too responsible for their actions—there was insufficient responsibility ambiguity at the last link in the organizational chain. The resulting responsibility clarity stimulated among some executioners intense feelings of guilt and, most commonly, repugnance (feelings that varied in intensity, depending on the type of victim). While throughout the war the Nazi regime never completely abandoned this highly mobile method of killing, as 1941 came to an end it was clear that firearms alone could not provide any long-term "solution" to the Nazi's now European-wide "Jewish problem,"[161] especially when many of the victims dressed, sounded, and often looked like the perpetrators. What was needed instead was a *more* impersonal, less public, less labor intensive, and even more industrial and organized method of mass extermination. When Himmler dumped Jeckeln in early December 1941, the SS-Reichsführer clearly sensed that a new method was on the horizon.

Notes

1. Bauman (1989, p. 105).
2. Poliakov (1979, p. 123, as cited in Markusen and Kopf 1995, p. 134).
3. Kwiet (1998, p. 10).
4. Neitzel and Welzer (2012, p. 113).
5. Kwiet (1998, p. 10).
6. Musmanno (1961, p. 76).
7. Similar avoidance-type strain resolving techniques developed elsewhere. For example, the Black Wall of Auschwitz may have been painted this color because it hid, to some degree, the gradually accumulating and unsettling blood, bone, and brain-splatter that might otherwise remind the executioners of the extremes of their actions. In a similar way, prisoners accompanied with shovels were instructed by the shooters to cover "the foaming pools of blood with sand after every pair of executions" (Naumann 1966, p. 168).
8. Desbois (2008, p. 139).
9. The technique was used during the Polish invasion (see Hochstadt 2004, pp. 90–91).
10. Kwiet (1998, p. 7).
11. Kwiet (1998, p. 20).
12. Kwiet (1998, p. 20).
13. Hilberg (1961, p. 249). One Einsatzgruppen member said "We could only stand it drunk. We believed that we had to shoot our way through to the Ural Mountains" (quoted in Langerbein 2004, p. 186).
14. Dicks (1972, p. 207). Alcohol is a powerful strain resolving tool because, as Baumeister (1997, p. 342) suggests, it has two overlapping effects: "First, it seems to produce low-level thinking. When people get drunk, their thinking becomes narrow, rigid, and concrete, and this focus minimizes thoughts of grand principles (such as morals) and the emotions that accompany them. Second, alcohol tends to deflect thinking away from the self, and so one does not dwell on issues of identity and responsibility."
15. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 62).
16. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 62).
17. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 97).
18. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 60).
19. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 140). See also Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 156) and Hilberg (2003, p. 329). One German executioner believed Jewish women about to be shot were generally calmer than the men during their last moments (Neitzel and Welzer 2012, pp. 126–127).

20. Hermann Friedrich Graebe witnessed a similar event on 5 October 1943: "Without screaming or weeping these [Jewish] people undressed, stood around in family groups, kissed each other, said farewells and waited for a sign from another S.S.-man, who stood near the pit, also with a whip in his hand. During the 15 minutes that I stood near the pit I heard no complaint or plea for mercy" (quoted in Musmanno 1961, p. 105). See also Gitelman (1997, pp. 282–283), Johnson and Reuband (2005, pp. 239–240), and Kwiet (1998, p. 19).

21. Quoted in Hilberg (1961, p. 249). Hilberg emphasizes this issue: "The entire Jewish community, and particularly the Jewish leadership, now concentrated all its efforts in one direction—to make the ordeal bearable, to make death easy" (p. 668). However, as the Warsaw ghetto uprising and prisoner revolts at Treblinka, Sobibor, and Auschwitz (discussed later) show, Jewish resistance did increase.

22. Bauman (1989, p. 23). See also Goldhagen (1996, p. 219) and Kwiet (1998, p. 18).

23. Quoted in Benz (1999, p. 86).

24. Hilberg (1961, pp. 217–218).

25. Friedländer (2007, p. 362).

26. Arad et al. (1989, p. 228) and Headland (1992, p. 64).

27. Quoted in Headland (1992, p. 64).

28. Headland (1992, p. 64). Another example of the mentally ill's ironic resistance to Nazi persecution was noted by Primo Levi in his description of the indomitable concentration camp inmate Lindzin Elias who—ill-fit for normal society—seemed designed to survive the brutal deprivations of a place like Auschwitz, "Elias has survived the destruction from outside, because he is physically indestructible; he has resisted the annihilation from within because he is insane. So, in the first place, he is a survivor: he is the most adaptable, the human type most suited to this way of living. If Elias regains his liberty he will be confined to the fringes of human society, in a prison or a lunatic asylum" (2013, p. 109).

29. Longerich (2012, p. 536). Interestingly, there was a gap in Lange's gassing activities in the Wartheland between the start and end of October 1941 where his commando technically could have undertaken these killings in the Soviet interior (see Montague 2012, pp. 40–43).

30. Bauman (1989, p. 26).

31. Quoted in Musmanno (1961, p. 82).

32. Grossman (1995, p. 117).

33. Grossman (1995, p. 128).

34. For a similar example of shooters relying on this technique, see Cesarani (2016, p. 396).

35. Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 134).
36. Browning (1992).
37. Kühl (2016, p. 77).
38. Kühl (2016, p. 87).
39. Somewhat similarly, one squad leader ensured that all his subordinates at least viewed (as spectators) an execution. This was to both "strengthen the group's sense of cohesiveness" and meant as a means of entrapment to ensure that nobody could later deny having a connection to, or knowledge of, the massacres (Angrick and Klein 2009, p. 140).
40. See Goldhagen (1996, p. 280).
41. Goldhagen (1996, p. 217). This shooting technique was relied on by some members of the SS during the Polish invasion (see Hochstadt 2004, pp. 90–91).
42. See Klee et al. (1988, p. 201).
43. Quoted in Wilhelm (1991, p. 231, as cited in Rhodes 2002, p. 114).
44. Langerbein (2004, p. 113).
45. As quoted in Pohl (2008, p. 29).
46. Pohl (2008, pp. 30–31).
47. Pohl (2008, p. 28). See also Bloxham and Kushner (2005, p. 136).
48. Pohl (2008, pp. 31–32).
49. Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 146).
50. Breitman (2000, p. 41).
51. Hilberg (1961, p. 196).
52. Büchler (1986, p. 17).
53. Browning (2004, pp. 326–327).
54. Browning (1995, p. 121).
55. Browning (2004, pp. 325–328).
56. Aly (2006, p. 117). Hitler's reversal in policy may also have been influenced by Stalin's forced resettlement of nearly half a million ethnic Germans living within the Soviet sphere of influence to Siberia (Cesarani 2016, p. 423).
57. Longerich (2010, p. 269).
58. Aly (2006, p. 26).
59. Quoted in Aly (2006, p. 175).
60. Quoted in Aly (2006, p. 173).
61. Pohl (2008, p. 35).
62. Pohl (2008, p. 35).
63. Korey (1993, p. 62).
64. Pohl (2008, p. 35).
65. Quoted in Korey (1993, p. 63).
66. Quoted in Cesarani (2016, p. 404).
67. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 63).

68. See Cesarani (2016, p. 367).
69. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, pp. 64–66). See also Lozowick (1987, p. 224).
70. Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 134).
71. Korey (1993, p. 63).
72. Korey (1993, p. 63).
73. Quoted in Lozowick (1987, p. 236).
74. Quoted in Korey (1993, p. 62).
75. Lozowick (1987, p. 236).
76. Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 134).
77. Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 132).
78. Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 134).
79. Angrick and Klein (2009, pp. 135–136).
80. Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 136).
81. See Ritzer (2015, pp. 33–35).
82. Quoted in Gerth and Mills (1974, p. 214).
83. Pohl (1997, p. 405).
84. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 67).
85. Headland (1992, p. 211).
86. Höss (2001, pp. 147–148).
87. Quoted in Streit (1994, p. 116). See also Kwiet (1993, p. 88).
88. Lifton (1986, p. 15). See also Klee et al. (1988, pp. 83–84).
89. Quoted in Lower (2013, p. 93).
90. Pohl (2008, p. 42). Here Heydrich does not seem to have envisioned the extermination of the European Jews because around 13 October 1941 he approved of a proposal (revoked a few days later) to deport Spanish Jews based in France to Morocco (see Mommsen 1986, p. 123).
91. See Pohl (2008, p. 26).
92. Friedländer (2007, pp. 284–285).
93. Kühne (2010, p. 155).
94. Aly (2006, p. 127).
95. Head of the Cologne Finance Department (quoted in Aly 2006, p. 118).
96. Roseman (2002).
97. See, for example, Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 191).
98. Friedländer (2007, p. 339).
99. Quoted in Gerwarth (2011, p. 209).
100. Quoted in Friedländer (2007, p. 280).
101. Cesarani (2016, p. 416).
102. Hilberg (1980, p. 91).
103. Breitman (2000, p. 74).
104. Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 130).

105. Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 131).
106. Quoted in Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 134).
107. Angrick and Klein (2009, pp. 132–133).
108. Browning (2004, p. 395).
109. Breitman (2000, pp. 82–83) and Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 146).
110. According to Jeckeln, on 10 and 11 November Himmler instructed him that it was "the Führer's wish" that the Jews in or destined for transition in the city of Riga were to undergo "evacuation to the East." Jeckeln confidently interpreted these ambiguous orders to mean, "the Riga ghetto was to be liquidated" (Fleming 1984, p. 44).
111. Breitman (2000, p. 83) suspects Himmler wanted to save this particular transport because there were a number of decorated World War One veterans on board. Kershaw adds that Himmler perhaps received complaints that part-Jews and non-Jewish Germans with Jewish partners may have been among the deportees (2000, p. 122). Perhaps Himmler feared that if the German Jews were immediately shot, the Jews remaining in the west would soon hear about these massacres (as they did) and thereafter resist, as best they could, resettlement (see Cesarani 2016, p. 430). Another possible reason these Jews were not to be shot was because a vacillating Hitler feared "a possible loss of prestige" (Mommsen 1986, p. 114).
112. Browning (2004, p. 398). See also Friedländer (2007, p. 267).
113. Browning (2004, p. 397).
114. Breitman (2000, p. 81) and Hilberg (2003, p. 304).
115. See Breitman (2000, pp. 83–84).
116. Koonz (2003, p. 181).
117. Quoted in Longerich (2010, p. 298).
118. Quoted in Fleming (1984, p. 117). See also Browning (1992, p. 67).
119. Browning (2004, p. 397).
120. Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 152).
121. Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 152).
122. Pressac and van Pelt (1998, pp. 201, 208).
123. Gerlach (1997, p. 60).
124. Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 190). Interestingly, Himmler was in Mogilev between 23 and 25 October and discussed killing civilians with gas (Browning 2004, p. 189).
125. Gerlach (1997, pp. 65–69).
126. Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 190).
127. Quoted in Longerich (2010, pp. 279–280). During Wetzel's 1961 interrogation, he more specifically noted, "On 24 October 1941, I went to Brack's office in the Führer's Chancellery on Voβstrasse. Brack said…that he had an assignment for me. I was to convey the following

message to Minister Rosenberg: Minister Rosenberg should inform Reichskommissar Lohse that he, Brack, had a gassing apparatus ready for shipment to Riga. Brack told me that the gassing apparatus was to be used on the Jews, and that Eichmann had agreed that this gassing van should be sent to Riga. Jewish convoys would also be sent to Riga and Minsk. […] In the course of this briefing, Brack told me that this was a Führer-order or Führer-commission" (quoted in Fleming 1984, p. 110). See also Angrick and Klein (2006, p. 338, as cited in Longerich 2012, p. 548).

128. Gerlach (1997, pp. 60, 67, 69).
129. Breitman (2000, p. 85).
130. Matthäus (2004, p. 273).
131. Breitman (2000, p. 52) and Matthäus (2007, p. 231).
132. Quoted in Browning (2004, p. 310).
133. Breitman (2000, p. 53).
134. Browning (1994, p. 140).
135. Browning (1995, p. 106).
136. According to one report by Einsatzgruppe D, "The Romanians proceed against the Jews without any plans. There would be nothing to complain about the very numerous shootings of Jews if the technical preparations and implementation were not so inadequate" (quoted in Browning 2004, p. 400). Dicks (1972) tells how the prosecutor at one SS officer's trial suggested the officer had "stopped the wild shooting of the Lithuanian auxiliary police, but he substituted for it the routine mechanical slaughter of the Chicago stockyards at the rate of 500 [Jews] a day" (p. 206).
137. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 153).
138. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 154).
139. See, for example, Matthäus (2004, p. 275).
140. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 81).
141. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 46).
142. Matthäus (2004, p. 273).
143. MacQueen (1997, p. 100).
144. Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 156).
145. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 126). See also Hilberg (1992, pp. 63–64, 95–96).
146. Lower (2005, pp. 251–252).
147. In Belorussia, where locals were not particularly interested in collaborating in the extermination process, the Germans frequently imported shooters from Latvia and Lithuania (Matthäus 2004, p. 268). The Germans were so reliant on Latvian executioners to do their dirty work

that Schneider (1993, p. 193) terms these shooters Latvia's "most famous 'export'."

148. Quoted in Schneider (1993, p. 183).
149. Arad (1987, pp. 20–21) and Browning (1992, p. 52).
150. Quoted in Herbert (2000, p. 257, as cited in Rees 2005, p. 44).
151. Breitman (1991, p. 204).
152. Hilberg (1961, p. 646).
153. Lower (2005, p. 251).
154. Allen (2005, p. 266).
155. Quoted in Lower (2002, p. 14).
156. Jeckeln was probably an exception. In all likelihood, he was driven more by a competitive desire to most impressively implement the "Führer's wish" than by a concern to ease his men's psychological burden (see Angrick and Klein 2009, p. 146). Jeckeln certainly saw Stahlecker's Einsatzgruppe A (more specifically Jäger's small yet highly lethal commando) as his main competition (p. 135). When Jäger liquidated a trainload of Reich Jews in Kaunas on 25 November, Jeckeln chose to disobey Himmler's orders to house (and not shoot) the first trainload of Reich Jews sent his way.
157. Karl Kretschmer of Sonderkommando 4a (quoted in Klee et al. 1988, p. 171).
158. Kühl (2016, pp. 143–147).
159. Bauman (1989, p. 15). Bauman, however, has most frequently been criticized because he focuses too much on the clearly modern factory-like model of Auschwitz and pays little attention to the (apparently) disorganized, emotionally proximate, and unbureaucratic mass shootings (see Bloxham 2008, p. 209; De Swaan 2015, p. 255; Kühl 2016, pp. 22–23; Lawson 2010, p. 148). As Bloxham and Kushner (2005, p. 155) put it: "Neither can the murder by shooting in situ of millions of Polish, Soviet and Serbian Jews be described in any meaningful sense as a modern 'bureaucratic' process." This chapter, however, challenges Pohl's (1997, p. 405) "de-bureaucratization" thesis (as Bloxham and Kushner describe it).
160. See http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005219. Accessed 14 September 2017.
161. Lower (2005, p. 245).

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The Rise of Operation Reinhard

Soon after the start of the Nazi regime's furtive T4 euthanasia project in 1939, rumors spread that the Nazi regime was killing Germans with disabilities. On 8 July 1940, for example, a provincial probate judge wrote in a letter to the minister of justice, "'Everyone knows as well as I do' that 'the murder of the mentally ill is as well known a daily reality as, say, the concentration camps.'"[1] These suspicions were confirmed when some of the victims' families received death certificates claiming clearly spurious causes of death. Some said that victims who had long ago had their appendixes removed died of appendicitis.[2] Heated and public protests ensued—most notably led by Count Clemens August von Galen, the Archbishop of Münster.[3] The Nazis may have been a dictatorship but they knew, as all long-lasting autocracies do, broad public dissent does not bode well for political longevity. For this reason, Hitler had always been sensitive to the emotional vagaries of public opinion.[4] After placing the popular and potentially influential von Galen under house arrest, on 24 August 1941, the Führer ended, at least officially, the euthanasia program.[5] At just the same time, however, the Eastern shooting campaign was expanding and, because these massacres were causing psychological problems for many shooters, Nebe and Fritzsch were about to embark on their search for a more "humane" way of killing civilians (ending in their discoveries of two cheap and mobile gassing techniques).

This chapter details what evolved into the large-scale gassing programs in the East, with a particular emphasis on Operation Reinhard—the extermination of Jews in the city ghettos of the General Government.

What follows shares much in common with the pattern of escalation depicted in the previous chapters: initially low rates of killing, top-down pressure to increase those rates, the application of formal rationality from the bottom-up (increased experimentation, bureaucratization, and the honing of a less stressful killing process), resulting in increased kill rates that only served to stimulate new top-down pressures to meet new and even more ambitious goals, thus occasioning an ever-expanding cycle of destruction. Much like with the shootings, top-down and bottom-up forces "radicalized each other."[6] Much like Milgram's pilot studies where all the kinks in his increasingly powerful procedure were ironed out, with time and experience the key innovators during this gassing program also ironed out every kink that threatened their goal—kill every person sent their way. As we shall see, the result was Operation Reinhard, an increasingly efficient program that killed between 1.5 and 1.7 million people in just 20 months.

New Opportunities

With the suspension of T4's euthanasia program, individuals who had developed an expertise in gassing civilians suddenly found themselves out of work. One such person, the previously mentioned chemist August Becker, later explained what the SS-Reichsführer had planned for them: "Himmler wanted to deploy people who had become available as a result of the suspension of the euthanasia program, and who, like me, were specialists in extermination by gassing, for the large-scale gassing operations in the East which were just beginning."[7] Becker notes in more detail,

> When in December 1941 I was transferred to Rauff's department he explained the situation to me, saying that the psychological and moral stress on the firing squads was no longer bearable and that therefore the gassing programme had been started. He said that gas-vans with drivers were already on their way to or had indeed reached the individual Einsatzgruppen. My professional brief was to inspect the work of the individual Einsatzgruppen in the East in connection with the gas-vans. This meant that I had to ensure that the mass killings carried out in the lorries proceeded properly.[8]

From November onward,[9] the Einsatzgruppen received at least 15 gas vans fitted out with Nebe's exhaust innovation: Einsatzgruppe

A two; Einsatzgruppe B four; Einsatzgruppe C five; and Einsatzgruppe D four.[10] The inventive chemist, Albert Widmann (from the RSHA's Criminal Technology Institute), was on hand to provide the execution squads with assistance and advice on using the vans—a role Becker would soon fill. A member of Blobel's squad by the name of Lauer described what Spektor believes was the earliest documented gas van operation on Soviet territory. In November 1941:

> Two gas vans were in service. I saw them myself. They drove into the prison yard, and the Jews—men, women, and children—had to get straight into the vans from their cells. I also know what the interior of the vans looked like. It was covered with sheet metal and fitted with a wooden grid. The exhaust fumes were piped into the interior of the vans. I can still hear the hammering and the screaming of the Jews—'Dear Germans, let us out!'[11]

The gas vans enabled the executioners to avoid the stressful visual spectacle associated with guns, but clearly they failed to shield them from the noise generated by those dying inside. A witness, Eugenia Ostrovec, described tactics reminiscent of Milgram's participants talking over the learner's screams in an attempt to neutralize this remaining source of perceptual information. "When it was quite full, the doors were firmly locked. The driver started the engine and left it running at full revs, but he couldn't drown the cries of the prisoners and the trampling of feet inside the van."[12] Although some gas van operators certainly used the truck's motor to help neutralize the victims' screams, Becker's report to Berlin of 16 May 1942 reveals that this was unlikely the only reason for pressing on the accelerator: "In order to get the Aktion finished as quickly as possible the driver presses down on the accelerator as far as it will go."[13]

Because the original euthanasia program had used canisters of pure carbon monoxide, which is both odorless and colorless,[14] gassing technicians were more likely to have been spared the cries of panicking victims. In those cases, by the time the condemned realized what was happening to them, it was generally too late to react. On the other hand, the malodorous and visible diesel fumes used in the vans left victims alert to the presence of great danger and they reacted with desperation. They produced frightful sounds that proximate perpetrators found difficult to avoid.

But for the perpetrators, the sounds of dying people were not the only disturbing source of perceptual stimulation they encountered. Blobel's chauffeur described the visual spectacle that greeted perpetrators once the victims were killed. "The back doors of the van were opened, and the bodies that had not fallen out when the doors were opened were unloaded by Jews who were still alive. The bodies were covered with vomit and excrement. It was a terrible sight."[15] Faced with such a sight, the mentally fragile Blobel "looked, then looked away, and we drove off. On such occasions Blobel always drank schnapps, sometimes even in the car."[16] Perhaps fearing Heydrich's accusations that he was "soft,"[17] the attentive and pandering Blobel was determined to complete his distasteful assignment. Blobel's avoidance behavior is reflected in a report sent from RSHA chief mechanic Pradel to Rauff on 5 June 1942 on ways to improve the vans. "The observation windows that have been installed," which helped the perpetrators determine if the victims had died, "…could be eliminated, as they are hardly ever used."[18]

While Einsatzgruppe C came to depend on their gas vans, other squads made little or no use of them, preferring instead to continue shooting their victims. Becker implied a reason for this in a report he sent to Berlin on 16 May 1942:

> I would like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to the following: some of the Kommandos are using their own men to unload the vans after the gassing. I have made commanders of the Sonderkommandos in question aware of the enormous psychological and physical damage this work can do to the men, if not immediately then at a later stage.[19]

Where Blobel's men had Jews unload the vans, other Einsatzgruppen units decided, for security reasons, to deploy their own men to perform this harrowing task.[20]

For many perpetrators, it was important to kill victims as quickly as possible. In this respect, the gas vans were clearly inferior to a bullet in the back of the neck. Although the gas vans enabled the Germans to avoid having to see their victims die, the prolonged screaming and the visual spectacle after the back doors of the van were opened made it difficult to deny the reality that their victims had died slow and agonizing deaths. Consequently, some of the Einsatzgruppen commanders and their men formed the opinion that compared with the neck shot, the

vans actually caused greater emotional stress for perpetrators. The verdict of a 1972 court case in Munich stated,

> The defendant Schuchart declared to a member of the commando that personally he would have preferred to be shot rather than gone into the truck. When the doors were opened the bodies were all entangled and covered with excrement. As a result of complaints from members of the commando, the defendant Schuchart later refused to use the gas vans again, on the grounds that it was impossible to persuade his men to carry out such a task.[21]

Of course, forcing Jews to remove their own people from the vans meant the executioners could, if they so desired, avoid the perceptual realities of their genocidal contributions.[22]

Indeed, the inventors of the gas van paid little attention to the slow and painful manner of their victims' deaths because their search for a more "humane" method centered, first and foremost, on alleviating the executioners'—not the victims'—psychological stress. The members of the Einsatzgruppen tasked with using these vans then faced what they would have interpreted as a moral dilemma: to use firearms that killed instantly and were arguably less painful for the victims, but generated an unavoidable visual spectacle that inflicted an immediate and lasting psychological burden on the shooter, or to use gas vans that could eliminate any disturbing visual spectacles for themselves, but inflicted a cruel and prolonged death on the victims. Many German executioners believed the gas van to be an inhumane and "cowardly" means of inflicting death. As Hans Stark said of the gas vans during his trial after the war:

> "It was a terrible sight." Judge Hofmeyer: "Did the people appear to have gone through an agonizing death struggle?" "I didn't look closely; one glimpse was enough for me." "How did you feel?" "Never again." "Why? Did you think it was wrong?" "No, certainly not." "Well, then, why 'never again' if it was right and necessary?" "When someone was shot it was entirely different, but the use of gas was not manly, it was cowardly."[23]

There were other problems too. It did not help matters that the vans struggled to master the frequently muddy Soviet late-fall terrain. Also, the Einsatzgruppen's 15 or so vans could not match the killing efficiency of a mass shooting like Babi Yar.[24] Hilberg is correct: In the end,

Nebe's gassing innovation was not the killing "panacea" that Himmler and many shooting squad members were hoping for.[25] Many of the men returned to shooting or simply passed this dirty work on to their Eastern European collaborators. It transpires, however, that another group outside the Einsatzgruppen—the euthanasia program's Lange Commando—also received several exhaust fume gas vans. And in the hands of T4 gassing professionals like Lange, Nebe's innovation went on to have, as we shall see, devastating consequences for those Jews and Gypsies still alive in the Wartheland.

The Origins of the First Extermination Camp: Chełmno

It will be recalled that based on Himmler's mid-October 1941 instructions to Eichmann, Lódź was to be one of the four cities to receive trainloads of Western Jews. More precisely, on 18 September, Himmler wrote to Wartheland Governor Arthur Greiser and told him to expect the arrival of 60,000 Western Jews, all of whom were apparently to be moved further east the following spring.[26] Greiser negotiated this number down, and across October and November, 20,000 Western Jews and 5000 Austrian Roma Gypsies were sent to the already over-crowded Lódź ghetto.[27] How the Lódź ghetto was supposed to accommodate this large influx of people—where that winter officials like Rolf-Heinz Höppner expected many Jews would starve—was now Greiser's problem. Lódź's Jewish council would not have welcomed Himmler's news: The resettlement of so many relatively rich Western Jews into the ghetto would likely accentuate starvation among the poorest Polish Jews because the former's greater wealth would cause the general cost of food to rise.[28] In a panic, Greiser instructed Wilhelm Koppe, Lange's superior officer, to somehow find a way of ensuring the ghetto could accommodate this large influx of newcomers.[29] It is no coincidence that around this point in time the Lange Commando went from gassing Poles with disabilities (T4) to exterminating the potentially far more numerous Wartheland Jews (and others).[30] Lange and his men were unlikely fazed by this sudden change to a more numerous victim category: A proportion of their usual victims had been Jewish and, anyway, others elsewhere over the last few months had been shooting Jews *en masse*. Because Greiser and those below him like Marder and Biebow were, as Browning argues, committed "productionists," Lange was instructed to kill only non-working Jews.[31] He could not, however, set out by killing

non-working Jews in the Lódź ghetto—word of his instructions might spread panic among his main target population. Lange needed to start somewhere else—a more isolated locale where he could hone an increasingly refined large-scale killing operation.

The Lange Commando's "opening salvo" on the Jews was aimed at those living in the Grodziec and Rzgów ghettos in Konin County, located about 100 kilometers northwest of Lódź.[32] Although the details surrounding this massacre are hazy at best, evidence suggests that across several days in late September and early October 1941, the Lange Commando very likely gassed and probably shot about 1500 Jews.[33] Then, after gassing 290 elderly Jews in late October about 50 kilometers to the south of these ghettos,[34] Lange's men soon returned to Konin County. This time the Lange Commando had the much larger rural ghetto in Zagórów—about 3000 non-working Jews—in their sites.[35] Facing this larger victim pool, Lange must have wondered how, armed with one gas van dependent on limited supplies of gas canisters and 15 or so armed men (with no Jeckeln-style mass shooting experience), his commando was supposed to quickly exterminate so many people. It appears Lange, facing this killing conundrum, did what other rational problem-solvers a month or two before him did in places like Minsk, Mogilev, Lublin, Auschwitz I, and Mauthausen. That is, from the bottom-up, as best he could, Lange improvised and invented a potentially effective means of meeting his top-down superior's demands to rapidly kill large numbers of civilians: He "experimented with a new form of killing."[36] In doing so, Lange obviously hoped that his newly devised method would provide sufficient room for the large influx of Western Jews that had arrived or were heading to the Lódź Ghetto. According to one non-Jewish Polish prison laborer Mieczysław Sękiewicz, around mid-November 1941, the Zagórów Jews were transported to a nearby forest. In the forest, two large pits had been dug, the larger of which had been layered with chunks of unslaked lime. Lange's men then ordered the naked Jews to enter and stand in the larger pit. From "above the only thing visible was the heads of the people, tightly packed in the pit."[37] Then, according to Sękiewicz:

> I noticed four vat-like things on the truck. Next, the Germans set up a small engine, which was probably a pump. Using a hose, they connected it to one of the vats. Two of the Gestapo officers then dragged the hose from the motor to the large pit. They started the motor and these two Gestapo

officers holding the hose began pouring something onto the Jews crowded in the pit. I think it was water, that's what it looked like but I'm not sure […] Apparently, as a result of the slaking of the lime, the people began to boil alive. The screaming was so horrible that those of us who were sitting near the clothing tore off pieces of material and put them in our ears. The horrible screams of those being boiled in the pit was joined by the screaming and wailing of those still waiting to be executed. That lasted for about two hours, possibly longer.[38]

The next day Sękiewicz observed that "[t]he mass of people inside had collapsed and sunk towards the bottom of the pit. The bodies were packed so tightly together that they remained in the somewhat vertical position; only their heads were tilted in all different directions."[39] Lange must have assessed his experiment a failure because despite the slacked lime achieving his goal—in just a few hours a large number of Jews had been killed—the commando gassed the remaining victims.[40] Presumably, the Germans, again with themselves in mind, found this new killing method too harrowing.

Around the time of this massacre, that is mid-November, commando member Walter Burmeister recalled driving Lange to Berlin.[41] Around the period of Lange's stay in Berlin, T4 leader Karl Brandt perhaps caught wind of Lange's disturbing experience when trying to quickly exterminate large numbers of Polish Jews and aware that contemporaneously the Einsatzgruppen were receiving the latest in gas van technology, deemed it wise to direct a few of Nebe's vehicles to the Wartheland. More certainly, Brandt informed Koppe (Lange's superior) that "the 'testing of Brack's [Nebe's] gas' was planned for the Warthegau [Wartheland]."[42] Lange returned to his team in Poznań with instructions to set up a new permanent base close to the Lódź ghetto.[43] With his preconceived goal to construct a permanent gassing facility, Lange in the role of the problem-solving project manager kicked into action. First up, he needed a location, more manpower, and, upon the arrival of his new fleet of gas vans, an efficient extermination process. Nearing the very end of 1941, Lange selected a castle with a large basement located in the small township of Chełmno.[44] Lange found the castle attractive for several reasons: It was secluded in a quiet rural setting yet connected to road and rail networks. Also, Chełmno was centrally nestled among the largest Jewish populations living in the Wartheland,[45] particularly the Lódź ghetto only 60 kilometers away.[46] Seclusion was important

because, again, Lange's deadly assignment had to remain a secret from his Jewish targets. But with several Jewish communities living within a five- to 15-kilometer radius of the castle, Chełmno's prized central location also threatened to reveal its dark secret. Once Lange had recruited more manpower, he would need to neutralize this threat to preconceived goal achievement.

After the Konin County massacre, Lange's usual crew was sent to Chełmno. In need of more staff, Lange had increasing numbers of police officers based in Lódź transferred to his new camp. One of Lange's recruitment and retention strategies was, much like Milgram, to anticipate his prospective helpers' likely needs and desires. For example, one technique Lange relied on was the lure of pecuniary reward: On top of their usual salary, his German staff, much like those in the shooting squads,[47] "received a daily bonus of 12 Reichsmarks that doubled their pay relative to the others...."[48] On top of this, Lange gave his men special allotments of liquor and cigarettes.[49] One of the police transferees from Lódź was Alois Häfele, who arrived at Chełmno with some of his men around January 1942. On arrival, Lange told Häfele and his men that he (Lange) had been tasked with gassing local Jews, but in order to fulfill his orders he needed more manpower. According to Häfele, Lange added that to maintain secrecy about Chełmno's purpose, he only needed the new recruits to perform guard duties and thus "We would have nothing to do with the extermination of the Jews themselves."[50] Lange's attempt to recruit these policemen by suggesting they only had to perform ancillary (yet necessary) tasks is, again, somewhat similar to Milgram's Peer Administers Shock condition. Then again, Lange's strain resolving inducement may actually have been more congruent with the foot-in-the-door technique. That is, soon after Häfele committed himself to performing mere guard duties, he became more intimately involved in the killing of Jews and eventually became a key figure in the camp's extermination process.[51] Because Lange's orders had come from the very top of the Nazi hierarchy, he also alluded to the great national importance attached to them. As another camp guard Kurt Möbius said: "Hauptsturmführer Lange had told us that the orders concerning the annihilation of the Jews had been given by Hitler and Himmler."[52]

But if Lange intended to increase the scale of killing, who would he burden with the more arduous and repulsive tasks that his German staff were likely to shy away from? During the period he was setting up Chełmno, Lange returned to the prison at Fort VII and paid his old

Polish work commando a visit. On meeting with his old body disposal unit, Lange commented on their poor and somewhat emaciated physical condition and then supplied them with a meal of bread and sausages. Lange then informed the Poles that, if they were interested, he could really use their help on a new operation.[53]

Like all good project managers, Lange knew just what to say and do to get every diverse link in his anticipated organizational chain interested in working toward goal achievement. Because Lange utilized sometimes different routes when attempting to anticipate and then appeal to his helper's sometimes different motivational needs and desires, like Milgram, he was able to find a way of getting each of them on board with organizational goal achievement. Some signed on because they would make a rather generous living, there were promotional opportunities, and perhaps they saw great merit in Nazi ideology. Others might well have felt indifferently toward or even disagreed with Nazism, but during hard and dangerous times, who is going to turn down a well-paid and (relatively) safe job likely to come with lots of material perks? Some of Häfele's men, for example, might have accepted Lange's generous employment offer because of a preference to remain among an old and trusted group of comrades—people of great personal importance with whom they would do anything to remain on good terms with. And perhaps being involved in a top secret mission personally backed by Himmler and Hitler was enough to pique the interest of the more ambitious among them. For the most desperate of those Lange approached, clearly all it took was the offer of a decent meal and the opportunity to see another day. This is how Lange enhanced what organizational theorists term employee "performance motivation…."[54]

Interestingly—and in conflict with Goldhagen-like single motivational explanations of the Holocaust—Lange's reliance on various means of incentivizing his workforce illustrates the insufficient singular force of Nazi ideology.[55] On this note, although Lange was no doubt a strong-believing Nazi, it is unlikely he would have been concerned that some of his prospective helpers might have ardently disagreed with his politics or even Chełmno's organizational goal—all he cared about was that they performed their specialist roles. And much like Himmler and Heydrich before him, Lange did everything he could to make sure all those below him did just that. On the frequently discussed issue of perpetrator motivation during the Holocaust, as Kühl forcefully argues,

the motives for an organization member's actions play a subordinate role for the organization because organizations ultimately disregard the concrete motives of their members when they formulate behavioral expectations. Whether members meet an organization's formal expectations because of their identification with the goal, coercion, collegiality, money, or enjoyment of the activity is of secondary importance – just as long as they do it. The unsettling aspect from a sociological viewpoint is that, when it comes to organized violence, the motives driving people to participate in torture, shootings, or gassings are incidental. In the end, all that matters to the organization is that its members do what is expected of them....[56]

Nearing the end of 1941, some Polish prisoners and locals from the surrounding area were tasked with renovating the Chełmno castle.[57] It took them about a month to set the camp up,[58] upon which Lange's old guard addressed the previously mentioned threat to secrecy posed by those Jewish communities who lived near the castle. That is, between 8 and 11 December, Koło's Jewish community, just 14 kilometers away, were rounded up and killed in Lange's old gas van (thus using canisters of carbon monoxide), and then buried in a nearby forest.[59] These local Jews became Chełmno's first victims. As 1941 came to an end, Lange's men proceeded to exterminate nearly every Jewish person living within a 20-kilometer radius of the camp.[60] Consequently, secrecy about Chełmno was secured, at least among the remaining Wartheland Jews. Then, in early January 1942, Lange's men received orders to kill another new category of victim: the previously mentioned 5000 Austrian Roma Gypsies, who only two months earlier had arrived in the Lódź ghetto. It transpires that these Gypsies were restricted to a small and isolated corner of the ghetto,[61] and their living conditions were so atrocious that most of them contracted typhus.[62] In a desperate rush to inhibit the infectious disease from spreading, fix-it-man Lange received a call from his superiors. It took the commando eight days to gas and shoot the Gypsies, a task for which a no doubt grateful Lódź ghetto administration paid Lange 20,000 Reichsmarks.[63] But as far as Lange's main goal was concerned, the most important event around this point in time was that in January 1942, three new vans fitted with Nebe's innovation arrived at Chełmno.[64] After the camp infrastructure had been constructed, these vans suddenly provided Lange with access to a much cheaper, more abundant, and accessible source of gas. It was from this point onward

that Lange's men were able to start making major in-roads into their goal to eliminate non-working Jews in the Wartheland. However, just as the Lange Commando was about to convert their goal into reality, a few events that were to have a major bearing on the course of World War Two took place.

Centralization of the Extermination Process: The Wannsee Conference

In early to mid-December 1941 as Lange set up his camp, as mentioned, the German advance into the Soviet interior was repelled by a forceful Russian counteroffensive and the USA entered the war. At this time, Hitler informed his inner circle that all European Jews—Eastern and now also Western—were to experience a "clean sweep." Hitler's intentions at the private 12 December meeting appear to closely mirror his public threat issued back on 30 January 1939 to annihilate "the Jewish race in Europe." As the Training Journal of the Order Police dated December 1941 notes, the significant difference between early 1939 and late 1941 was that advances in capability had made Hitler's threat of extermination technically feasible.

> The word of the Führer [in his speech of January 1939] that a new war, instigated by Jewry, will not bring about the destruction of anti-Semitic Germany but rather the end of Jewry, is now being carried out. […] What seemed impossible only two years ago, now step-by-step is becoming a reality: the end of the war will see a Europe free of Jews.[65]

Now, the challenge to Nazi plans came from another source, a more difficult war on the Eastern, Western, Italian, and African fronts and the consequent need to find all the help they could to win the war.[66] The regime's desperation for slave labor meant it could ill afford to exterminate all Jews at that time. With respect to both the Jewish question and the threat of the Allied forces, the Nazi regime needed to seriously and quickly reassess their plans of attack.

The latest policy on the Jewish question was to be revealed at Heydrich's Wannsee Conference on 9 December. However, because Hitler had recently declared war on the USA, emergency military preparations dictated that some of the invitees could not attend. Also, the new Chief of KdS Latvia, Rudolf Lange, who according to Angrick and Klein

"had without a doubt been accorded by Reinhard Heydrich a special role at this meeting," was, for reasons that will become apparent, also unable to attend.[67] The Wannsee Conference was, therefore, postponed until 20 January 1942. In terms of the agenda, the only major difference between the proposed 9 December meeting and the 20 January postponement was, somewhat curiously, the addition to the original invitee list of two high-ranking officials from the General Government: Hans Frank and Friedrich-Wilhelm Krüger (both of whom ended up sending their assistants).[68] David Cesarani argues that Heydrich's addition of representatives from the General Government to the invitee list suggests either an earlier oversight or, more intriguingly, that in light of Hitler's 12 December inner-circle meeting, the purpose of the Wannsee Conference had been broadened beyond the deportation of just Reich Jews to the Ostland.[69]

On 8 January, Göring issued a decree on labor policy. All Soviet POWs—the Nazis' preferred, but now diminishing, source of slave labor—were henceforward to be assigned only to the all-important production of armaments.[70] These and other major policy changes indicated that the Nazi regime had plans in the spring to bounce back from its recent military setbacks.

When the Wannsee Conference finally went ahead, 14 mostly state secretaries and other high-ranking government officials were in attendance. The relatively lowly ranked shooting squad leader Rudolf Lange and Eichmann were also there, with the latter (or his assistant) tasked with taking the minutes, which were not verbatim. These minutes, however, are the only record of what was said. To these men, Heydrich revealed the latest plan to resolve the Nazis' "Jewish problem." Heydrich started the meeting by repeating Göring's 31 July mandate that delegated to him [Heydrich] full authority for resolving the "Jewish question."[71] As he asserted his authority, Heydrich made it clear that there were to be no other competitors secretly working toward the Führer's wish, only collaborators. Previously failed attempts at resolving this question were discussed, as was a new solution that the Führer had apparently authorized.[72] More specifically, a country-by-country survey showed that about 11 million Jews lived in Europe.[73] To deal with this population, the entire continent was to be "combed from West to East…."[74] Hitler's despised German Jews were to be a priority in this roundup, apparently because of a "housing problem and other sociopolitical considerations."[75] Those Jews caught in the Nazis' nets were to be transported by

train, thus drawing on Eichmann's strengths, and held in a small number of centralized concentration camps. Upon arrival at these camps, prisoners would undergo a selection process to identify those capable of productive labor. Those selected would go on to help strengthen Nazi Germany's economy and military capability.

According to Friedländer, Heydrich noted, "The evacuated Jews would be assigned to heavy forced labor (like the building of roads), which naturally would greatly reduce their numbers. The remnants, 'the strongest elements of the race and the nucleus of its revival,' would have to be 'treated accordingly.'"[76] Presumably, the Jews assigned to hard labor would receive an insufficient quantity of food, which would ensure that a normally innocuous task like road-building would greatly weaken them and perhaps even prove lethal. Heydrich, who was alluding to Organization Schmelt's earlier use and abuse of slave labor to construct the Autobahn in the East,[77] euphemistically termed this process "natural diminution."[78] When no longer capable of productive labor, these Jews were to be killed. Those who were killed would be replaced with new arrivals. This plan—referred to by some historians as "extermination through work"[79]—would not only counter the criticisms of the "productionists" regarding the wasteful extermination of potentially useful and now sorely needed slave labor, but could also appease the "attritionists" by eventually bringing about the total extermination of the European Jews.

So how did the Nazis intend to kill those Jews no longer capable of labor? And what, at the start of this process, was to be done with those not selected for work—the old, young, and weak? According to Friedländer, Heydrich said,

> decorated war veterans, invalids, and elderly Jews (from Germany and possibly some Western or Scandinavian counties) would be deported to the "old people's ghetto" in Theresienstadt (where they would die off). But what of all the others, the unmentioned vast majority of European Jewry? Heydrich's silence about their fate stated loudly that these nonworking Jews would be exterminated. The discussion that followed the RSHA chief's address clearly showed that he was well understood.[80]

Some evidence, however, suggests that apparent attendee "silence" to and "understanding" of Heydrich's speech might more accurately be described by words like "curiosity" and even "skepticism." For example,

according to Cesarani, during Eichmann's 1961 trial in Jerusalem, he confirmed that at Wannsee, "there had been blunt talk about killing methods in the second, informal half of the meeting."[81] If true (and Eichmann obviously stood to gain nothing by mentioning such things at his trial), perhaps this explains the presence of the relatively lowly and out-of-place Rudolf Lange. Most certainly, he was the only person present at Wannsee with expertise in the resettlement (killing) of Reich Jews sent to the East.[82] In fact, Lange had been unable to attend the cancelled 9 December meeting because the previous day his services as a supervisor during the massacre of Jews in the Rumbuli and then Bikernieki Forests could not be spared.[83] At the 20 January meeting, however, Lange could relay firsthand that mass shootings had, indeed, included Reich Jews (recall his run-in with Jeckeln)—mostly the elderly, women, and children. Perhaps Lange had been carefully selected as an invitee among the Wannsee elite because, unlike the most proven practitioners of mass shootings, the callous-mouthed Jeckeln or the ex-tradesman Karl Jäger, Lange was a jurist with all the accouterments that accompanied a person with a Ph.D. in Law. That is, Lange was much more likely to possess an air of sophistication, which might aid in taking the sharp edge off the barbaric topic under consideration.

Either way, Lange could have at least explained to the others first hand that, although there had been problems, since June 1941 hundreds of thousands of unwanted Jews had been shot.[84] Furthermore, when this method faltered, as it had when the shooting squads were faced with orders to kill Western Jews, Lange could have mentioned the recent arrival of gas vans in Riga,[85] or Heydrich could have chipped in by referring to the new gassing facilities at Auschwitz and Chełmno. Again, Heydrich knew about Organization Schmelt and it is interesting to note that since mid-November 1941 Schmelt had been sending exhausted road workers to Auschwitz to be gassed in Crematorium I.[86] As Heydrich said at Wannsee, "even now practical experience is being gathered that is of major significance in view of the coming Final Solution of the Jewish Question."[87] Eichmann was involved in the decision to send gas vans to Riga[88] and had visited Chełmno in January,[89] or perhaps earlier in December.[90] He had been instructed by Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller to observe, as Eichmann put it, "what was going on there."[91] So it is possible Eichmann also weighed in on the conversation. What became clear at Wannsee, then, was that the Nazis were rapidly moving in the direction of a more perfect "one best way" formula

of extermination that made provisions for the most useful Jews to make a brief contribution to strengthening Nazi Germany on their way to the grave. Representing Hans Frank, Staatssekretär Josef Bühler requested,

> that the General Government would welcome it if the final solution of this problem would begin in the General Government, as, on the one hand, the question of transport there played no major role and consideration of labor supply would not hinder the course of *Aktionen*. […] [This was because] of the approximately two and a half million Jews under consideration, the majority were in any case unfit for work.[92]

Perhaps Heydrich expected a response like this from Bühler—Heydrich was basically offering to kill anybody's unwanted Jews and, as all present would have known, nobody had more unwanted Jews than Governor Frank.[93] As mentioned, Frank had long held desires of one day making his fiefdom *Judenfrei*.

Putting this speculation aside, Bühler's request that the Jews in the General Government should be targeted first was accepted and soon after given the code name Operation Reinhard (in fitting memory of Heydrich, who was assassinated a few months later). The Wannsee Conference eventually broke down into a debate over what to do with genetically mixed German-Aryan Jews (whom one Wannsee attendee interestingly noted would surely prefer sterilization over death, or as attendee Otto Hofmann more delicately put it "evacuation").[94] Nonetheless, Heydrich had achieved his main goals: He presented a rough outline of the latest final solution to those leading bureaucrats in the civil service agencies whose help he needed to make it a reality and, relying on his somewhat coercive and manipulative style, he obtained their consent and future compliance.

Six days after the Wannsee Conference, on 26 January 1942, Himmler signaled the relinquishment of his preferred source of slave labor when—in line with Heydrich's above plan—he informed the Inspector of Concentration Camps,

> As no Russian prisoners of war can be expected in the near future, I am sending to the camps a large number of Jews who have emigrated [sic!] from Germany. Will you therefore make preparations to receive within the next four weeks 100,000 Jews and up to 50,000 Jewesses in the concentration camps. The concentration camps will be faced with great economic tasks in the coming weeks. *SS-Gruppenführer* Pohl will inform you in detail.[95]

In response to Himmler, Pohl stated in a report on 30 April 1942, "keeping prisoners on the grounds of security, re-education, or prevention was no longer a priority"; instead, the "main emphasis" had "shifted towards economics…."[96] On the same day, Pohl also informed the concentration camps that, "In order to achieve maximum performance this deployment must be exhausting in the truest sense of the word."[97]

With Höss's then five-month-old Zyklon-B gassing technique and Lange's activities in Chełmno probably gaining steam, Himmler did not need to worry about the potential economic burden of housing and feeding the unproductive "useless mouths" of the young, old, and exhausted in his concentration camps. Now, he could cheaply and efficiently have these Jews exterminated on arrival. Perhaps it was just a coincidence, but one month after the Wannsee Conference, the file on the Madagascar Plan was closed in favor of an alternative strategy.[98] And as we shall now see, after the Lange Commando received their new gas vans in January 1942, their destructive activities indeed gained steam.

Chełmno's Extermination Process: A Deadly Game of Deception

At Chełmno, as far as Koppe knew, the Lange Commando was,

> employed only *on an experimental basis* to begin with. This idea was based on the fact that a certain Dr. Brack, of Hitler's private chancellery, had already done some preparatory work with poison gases, and that these were to be tried out by the Sonderkommando Lange. […] Sonderkommando Lange was the *obvious choice* for carrying out the gassings…. [italics added][99]

For several reasons, the Lange Commando was, as Koppe put it, the obvious choice in this new "trial and error"[100] killing experiment. First, unlike some in the Einsatzgruppen units, Lange's men had learned a few years earlier not to unload the vans themselves. Second, any "soft" members of the Lange Commando who found the vans to be disgusting, stressful, dishonorable, or inhumane had, through attrition, long ago left the T4 ranks.[101] All such people had been replaced by others until eventually every position was filled by men unencumbered by such concerns. Third, the men remaining in the Lange Commando had accumulated extensive experience and had obviously become emotionally

inured (routinized) to killing increasing varieties of "useless mouths"—
those with disabilities, Polish Jews, and Gypsies. This is why the Lange
Commando was, as Koppe said, the "obvious choice…" But considering
that many of Lange's victims would come from the Wartheland's Lódź
ghetto, which, at the time, was receiving trainloads of Western and par-
ticularly German Jews, the true test would come in whether the com-
mando could handle exterminating non-workers who dressed, sounded,
and often looked much like themselves.

Across the winter months of 1941–1942, Lange's men quickly refined
and then settled on a standard operating procedure. As Montague
points out, the initial extermination process at Chełmno was "not fixed;
there was no outlined plan to follow…" But, as the following shows,
"as a result of the experience gained from each new transport…" by
the cold season's end, an efficient technique of mass extermination had
emerged.[102] Because the victims came from all over the Wartheland,
methods of transportation to Chełmno varied: trucks; trains followed by
walking; trains then trucks; and eventually, trains followed by use of a
narrow gauge rail line.[103] Whatever the mode of transportation, Lange's
men preferred breaking up the last part of the journey by detaining the
victims in some kind of holding pen: A nearby synagogue, church, and
an old mill were all trialed for this purpose.[104] In these holding pens,
Lange's men would restrict the victims' access to food, water, and san-
itary facilities. This holding pen technique was purposefully designed to
induce fatigue and render the victims docile to subsequent instructions.
With time and increasing experience, the Lange Commando settled on a
preferred holding pen: have the Jews wait under armed guard in freezing
conditions in the courtyard outside the purposefully bright and inviting
Chełmno castle.[105] When the Jews were sufficiently desperate for shelter,
camp guard Kurt Möbius describes what happened next:

> [T]hey waited some time in the courtyard. Then Plate or I addressed
> them. We told them that they were to be sent to Austria to a large assem-
> bly camp, where they would have to work. But, it was explained to them,
> they would first have to take a bath and have their clothes deloused. We
> told the Jews this so that they would not know what fate awaited them,
> and to encourage them to obey calmly the instructions that they were
> given. After this the Jews—men, women, and children—were taken to the
> ground floor of the castle.[106]

This purposefully polite speech was actually delivered by a variety of Lange's men, one of whom, the previously mentioned Walter Burmeister, occasionally wore a physician's white coat to bolster the guise that Chełmno was indeed a medical-type delousing facility.[107] German-speaking members of Lange's Polish work commando aided with translation.[108] To draw the freezing victims a little further into the net, the castle's ground floor was purposefully kept warm.[109] According to Burmeister, during the next part of the process,

> New arrivals undressed in the hall […] Their valuables and money were collected by Poles from the work detail. The Poles also wrote down the names, but that was only for form's sake. […] When the Jews had undressed, they were ordered to go down the stairs and into the cellar. […] signs hung bearing the words: 'To the Baths.' […] From the cellar, the naked people continued straight on, leaving the building by a rear door and going up onto a wooden ramp. One of the gas vans…was backed up to the end of the ramp with the doors open. […] The people who came out of the cellar by the rear door did not have any choice but to climb into the van. As soon as the interior was full…the door was closed.[110]

Again, according to Möbius,

> Most of the Jews got into the gas van calmly and obediently, trusting in the promises made to them. The Polish workers accompanied them. They carried leather whips with which they struck obstinate Jews who had become mistrustful and who hesitated to go further.[111]

Another guard, Theodor Malzmüller, provides more detail about this part of the process:

> The Jews were made to get inside the van. The job was done by three Poles, who I believe were sentenced to death.[112] The Poles hit the Jews with whips if they did not get into the gas-van fast enough. When all the Jews were inside the door was bolted. The driver then switched on the engine, crawled under the van and connected a pipe from the exhaust to the inside of the van.[113]

According to commando member Wilhelm Heukelbach, "Soon screams and groans could be heard coming from the interior. Those inside were hammering on the sides of the van."[114] The initial protocol was to drive

the vans out of the castle grounds to the burial site in the Maiden forest several kilometers away, thus killing the victims on route. But vans loaded with screaming victims passing through Chełmno's village streets detracted from Lange's desire that the local (Gentile) community remain unaware of his tasks.[115] Consequently, Lange's men had to adopt a less time-efficient protocol: The vans remained within the castle compound in a stationary position—for about 10 minutes or so[116]—until all the victims were dead. From the time the victims arrived at Chełmno to the time they entered the gas vans, no more than one-and-a-half hours had elapsed.[117] The vans loaded with dead bodies were then driven from the castle to the forest. Hauptscharführer Gustav Laabs describes what happened during his first driving mission:

> After about three kilometers we arrived in a clearing in the wooded area that runs alongside the road to Warthbrücken. In the clearing the officer told me to stop in front of a mass grave, where a work detail of Jews was working under the supervision of a police officer. There were also several policemen spread out in a circle, who were obviously on sentry duty. The police officer supervising the work detail ordered me to back the van up to the mass grave.[118]

According to Jacob W., a non-commissioned police officer, the clearing in the forest contained several mass graves shaped like large swimming pools, each about three meters deep. Two particularly large graves measured about thirty meters long and ten meters wide.[119] Across the winter of 1941/1942, these graves were dug using pickaxes and shovels.[120] From the spring onward, however, more efficient digging machinery was introduced.[121] One of the mechanically dug graves ended up being 254 meters long(!)[122] Laabs continues,

> Then the policeman who had driven in the cab with me undid the padlock that fastened the doors. A few members of the work detail were ordered to open the double doors. Eight or ten corpses fell to the ground, and the rest were thrown out of the back by the members of the work detail.[123]

After all the victims' gold teeth had been extracted,[124] their bodies were dumped in the graves and left to rot. Because the graves in the wintery conditions took so long to excavate, maximized utilization of this limited space was achieved by having the victims' bodies stacked facedown and

head-to-toe.[125] Initially, the Polish collaborators performed all of these grisly and arduous tasks, but, perhaps as a reward for their loyalty, with time Jewish work commandos were set up and performed most of this labor. Thereafter, the Poles moved on to other (relatively) more attractive roles: van maintenance; collecting and sorting clothing, valuables, and luggage; and even occasionally driving the vans.[126] In terms of role allocation, much like during the mass shootings, all the worst—arduous, stressful, and/or repulsive—jobs were assigned to some subordinate category of non-German.

If members of the Jewish work detail were unwilling or unable to perform their frightful roles, they were shot. According to a non-commissioned officer by the name of Josef I,

> Almost every day members of the Jewish work detail were shot in the forest camp, in the evening before the commandos returned to Kulmhof [Chełmno]. They were always Jews who were unfit for work or who refused to work. Most of the time five or six were killed, but sometimes as many as ten people were shot. The executions were mostly carried out by Polizeimeister Lenz. He ordered the Jews to lie face down on the edge of the mass grave. Then he took his pistol and shot them in the back of the neck. The other Jews then had to throw the bodies into the mass grave.[127]

Working in the Jewish work commando was undoubtedly a nightmare beyond imagination, and it is not surprising that many chose death over the offer to work and live a little longer.

After establishing the above standard operating procedure across the winter of 1941–1942, in March 1942 the "ironfist[ed]" Lange was transferred to the RSHA head office in Berlin and was replaced by the more "easygoing" commandant Hans Bothmann.[128] Easygoing or not, Lange's set procedure under Bothmann's supervision saw Chełmno continue to consume large numbers of Jewish lives. More specifically, it has been estimated that one cycle of the killing process at Chełmno could, depending on the size of the van used, kill between 35 and 170 civilians.[129] According to Möbius, one cycle could be performed "five to eight, sometimes even ten times a day" and, depending on the influx of Jews, do so potentially six days a week.[130] Obviously, Chełmno was never intended to single-handedly offer a solution to the Nazi's European-wide "Jewish question." Chełmno started out as an experiment to resolve a local problem—a pilot study that aimed to eliminate all the

"useless mouths" in the Lódź ghetto, thereby making room for influxes of Western Jews.[131] And unlike Lange's earlier experimental foray with slacked lime, the Chełmno pilot proved successful in achieving its goal. Between 16 January and 2 April 1942, 44,064 Jews from the Łódź ghetto were murdered in Chełmno.[132]

Two weeks later, on 16 April 1942, Himmler, after meeting with Hitler, flew into Poznań and met with Greiser and Koppe. What could they possibly have talked about? The following day Himmler, Koppe, and possibly Greiser met with some Baltic German settlers in the township of Koło (whose entire Jewish population, it will be recalled, had been exterminated in Chełmno several months earlier).[133] It is not known if Himmler visited the nearby castle, but he did order that 10,000 Western Jews in the Łódź ghetto (originally from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Luxemburg) be killed next. Four weeks later, his orders had been converted into a reality.[134] This was the first large-scale mass gassing of Western Jews.[135] As Montague notes, by "May 15, only 31 percent of these Western European Jews, who had arrived only some six months earlier, remained in the ghetto."[136] Killing the difficult-to-shoot Reich Jews—men, women, and children—who dressed, sounded, and often looked much like the Germans themselves obviously posed no problem for Lange's men. In fact, no matter what category of victim—whether they be mentally ill, Eastern Jews, Gypsies, Western Jews—Lange's gassing commando, eventually under Bothmann's management, never seemed to complain about any "burdening of the soul." A leader from Berlin just need to point his finger in a certain direction, and soon after all in that direction were dead.

The closest the Germans working at Chełmno came to encountering a major problem was when spring arrived. That is, the victims' bodies started decomposing and bodily fluids started spilling out of the mass graves. The putrid stench that filled the air proved so powerful that on 11 June 1942, Chełmno stopped accepting further transports.[137] The remains in the graves needed to be cremated. Independent of this problem, in March 1942 Himmler had already tasked the mentally fragile but nonetheless determined Paul Blobel with discovering the most efficient and effective techniques of mass cremation.[138] He did this because as the snow on the Eastern front started to thaw, it was feared that an advancing Red Army might discover mass graves filled with Soviet POWs and civilians. Even worse, what if the Wehrmacht's up-and-coming counteroffensive failed and Germany ended up losing the war? Facing such

possibilities, a less confident Himmler realized that his days of acting with impunity might be numbered.[139] Consequently, Blobel's goal was to erase all evidence of the Nazi's genocidal past.[140] His first assignment was the recently closed Chełmno camp where in the summer of 1942 he assembled a large group of Jewish workers known as Kommando 1005. Kommando 1005 set about exhuming, then cremating, the remains of the extermination camp victims in massive outdoor bonfires.[141] During Blobel's stay at Chełmno, he too used trial-and-error techniques of discovery until his team settled on the most efficient and effective techniques of mass cremation.[142]

Once Blobel's men got on top of the body disposal problem, Bothmann's commando was able to get back to what they did best. With several vans used across the score of months that Chełmno was open, the number of victims quickly added up. Information from a 1962 trial at Bonn has shown that between December 1941 and July 1944 at least 153,000 people for whom documentation existed were killed in the gas vans at Chełmno.[143] Having said this, because documentation did not always exist, according to Montague the actual victim count was "no doubt" higher.[144] Despite this massive number and as a dark sign of things to come, Chełmno was just the first of what Hilberg terms the most "primitive" of the Nazi extermination centers.[145] Despite its (relatively) primitive nature, the camp at Chełmno was thorough—of all the civilians sent its way, only seven managed to escape.[146] In the end, Chełmno saw the alignment of a number of factors that foreshadowed the success of mass killing on a much larger scale: a cheap/mobile gas, an industrialized assembly-line organizational process, centralization (where mobile victims were delivered to a stationary execution plant), and a hardened and professionally trained pool of specialist executioners. Therefore, on all fronts, Chełmno, as a small-scale experiment, glowed with immense killing potential. All that was needed were ideas likely to improve overall systemic efficiency, increase its scale, and finally replicate the number of such facilities. Elsewhere other more ambitious project managers were doing just this.

The Emergence of Operation Reinhard

More than three months before the Wannsee Conference and just as Lange was receiving instructions to kill Jews in the Wartheland, on 13 October 1941,[147] Odilo Globocnik suggested to Himmler[148] that

the General Government should be "Germanized" by killing the local Jews.[149] More specifically, Globocnik envisioned that killing off some local Jews in the General Government would help relieve the food supply problem, stem black market activity, and free up accommodation for newcomers,[150] particularly for inbound Slovakian and Reich Jews.[151] Himmler thus approved Globocnik's construction of a death camp in the General Government.[152] Perhaps the failure of Globocnik's own men around this point in time to find a more "humane" method of killing local Jews (using grenades) explains why, as the following shows, he was eventually sent the civilian-killing specialists who, after being "employed only on an experimental basis," might prove more capable of Germanizing the General Government.

Viktor Brack, a former member of the disbanded T4 team, stated in his postwar testimony,

> In 1941, I received an order to discontinue the euthanasia program. In order to retain the personnel that had been relieved of these duties and in order to be able to start a new euthanasia program after the war, Bouhler [head of the Führer Chancellery] asked me—I think after a conference with Himmler—to send this personnel to Lublin and place it at the disposal of SS *Brigadeführer* Globocnik.[153]

In fact, as 1941 came to an end, ninety-two ex-T4 personnel were sent east by the Führer Chancellery.[154] One of them, Christian Wirth, became Globocnik's top aide on 14 October 1941,[155] just one day after Himmler's meeting with Globocnik.[156] Wirth had been present at the first-ever euthanasia gassing pilot two years earlier and then started killing people at the T4's permanent gas chamber in the Brandenburg-Havel prison. Subsequently, Wirth was employed at Hartheim, the most "efficient" of all the T4 facilities, where, according to Adam, "he distinguished himself…by his organizational abilities."[157] In December 1941, Wirth arrived in Lublin.[158] Although Wirth was acquainted with the "advantages and disadvantages" of the gas vans used in the Soviet interior and at some point observed the killing process at Chełmno,[159] he does not appear to have contemplated using such vehicles in the General Government. Wirth's means-to-end logic more closely resembles an extension of the kind of system he had relied upon in Germany: a permanent gas chamber facility with the more efficient capacity to dispose of bodies on-site. Also gas vans had volume and weight limitations, but a permanent gas chamber

had no such restrictions and could—should it ever be required—potentially handle much larger numbers of victims per cycle.

On 1 November 1941, construction on Wirth's death camp—called Belzec—began.[160] The center's gassing apparatus was sourced from a recently abandoned T4 euthanasia facility in Germany.[161] According to Stanislaw Kozak, a Polish construction worker,

> we built a third barrack, which was 12 m. long and 8 m. wide. This barrack was divided by wooden walls into three sections, so that each section was 4 m. wide and 8 m. long. These sections were 2 m. high. The interior walls of these barracks were built such that we nailed the boards to them, filling in the empty space with sand. Inside the barrack the walls were covered with cardboard; in addition, the floors and the walls were covered with sheet zinc to a height of 1.1m.[162]

The actual gassing apparatus must have taken a long time to stripe and then transport out of Germany because the construction of Belzec's gas chambers was not completed until the end of February 1942. Then, Wirth, much as Lange had a few months earlier, pursued a number of pilot studies to test, refine, and iron out the kinks of his killing process. According to SS-Unterscharführer Franz Suchomel, "Belzec was the laboratory. Wirth was camp commandant. He tried everything imaginable there."[163] Again like Lange, Wirth initially used pure bottled carbon monoxide.[164] These pilots were undertaken over a period of several days and involved several convoys, each consisting of about four to six freight cars of Jewish victims.[165] Soon afterward, the canisters were substituted by exhaust fumes generated by a stationary 250 horsepower engine.[166] After test-running the new system, the Belzec extermination center opened on 17 March 1942. Although at this point (mid-March 1942) 75–80% of eventual Holocaust victims could be counted among the living, 11 months later only 20–25% would remain alive.[167]

Importantly, back in the fall of 1941 when Globocnik first approached Himmler over his desire to kill local Jews by building what became the Belzec extermination center, there were no plans to build other similar and accompanying death camps in the General Government. But at some point in time after the end of 1941 (probably early 1942), Wirth became sufficiently confident in Belzec's enormous killing potential. It was only on this realization that—with much larger numbers of victims in mind—longer-term plans to build other potentially "improved" Belzec-like

extermination camps were devised. I say this because it is unlikely the Nazi regime would invest significant sums of money into constructing such a large-scale multi-site project that, in the absence of any testing, might actually prove to be a failure. As Dieter Pohl insightfully notes, at some level a "limited capacity" version of Belzec *first had to prove its worth* before any "upgrading" was possible.[168] And obviously the best assessor of that worth was gassing expert Wirth. In support of this, as Wirth's liaison officer, SS-Untersturmführer Josef Oberhauser said, after Belzec first opened "the gassings were not yet part of a systematic eradication action but were carried out to test and study closely the camp's capacity and the technical problems involved in carrying out a gassing."[169] Upon Belzec, as it turned out, proving its destructive worth, as Oberhauser implies, it also made sense that the new death camp would serve as the experimental prototype from which all subsequent centers—Sobibor and Treblinka—would learn and advance.[170] Having said all this, Wirth must have become confident in Belzec's enormous killing potential just before or as the camp opened in, as just mentioned, mid-March 1942, because construction at Sobibor started sometime during the same month.[171]

Anyway, Wirth's observations of Belzec in action led to his recommendation that Sobibor be built on a larger section of land. More space at Sobibor meant, for example, that unlike at Belzec, more than a maximum of twenty train carriages at a time could enter the camp[172] and that confiscated property could more efficiently be stored on-site. It also meant at Sobibor a potentially longer path separating the undressing area from the gas chambers could be built (presumably better ensuring those victims undressing were less likely to hear the screams of those ahead of them in the process being gassed).[173] Wirth's biggest concern, however, was that frequent usage of Belzec's wooden gas chambers might fail to resist the internal pressures generated by the collective force of large groups of panicking victims.[174] It was therefore decided that Sobibor's gas chambers should be made from brick rather than wood. The newer and improved Sobibor extermination center, which opened in May 1942, was to be managed by ex-T4 employee Franz Stangl, whom Globocnik apparently believed to be "a good organizer…."[175] The initial chambers at Belzec and Sobibor were capable of killing approximately 150–200 and 140–160 people per gassing, respectively[176]—a task that could be performed several times a day.[177]

In mid-June 1942, Wirth suspended operations at Belzec so the wooden chamber could be replaced with a structurally stronger facility.[178] This suspension signaled the end of Belzec's first stage. In its three months in operation, nearly 100,000 Jews were killed.[179] Clearly, Belzec was a far superior killing facility to Chełmno (which at its peak efficiency took twice as long to kill the same number of people).[180] A month later, Himmler visited Globocnik at Operation Reinhard's headquarters in Lublin, presumably to receive a detailed progress report. By this time, Globocnik was armed with data about Belzec and Sobibor's killing capacity, the latter of which Himmler apparently visited that day.[181] Like Belzec, Sobibor had killed 90,000–100,000 Jews in its first three months of operation.[182] A few days later on 19 July 1942, after some meetings with Hitler, Himmler issued the staff of Operation Reinhard an end-of-year deadline.

> I herewith order that the resettlement of the entire Jewish population of the General Government be carried out and completed by December 31, 1942. From December 31, 1942, no persons of Jewish origin may remain within the General Government, unless they are in the collection camps in Warsaw, Cracow, Czestochowa, Radom, and Lublin. All other work on which Jewish labor is employed must be finished by that date, or, in the event that this is not possible, it must be transferred to one of the collection camps.[183]

It was during this month—July 1942—that Himmler apparently informed his personal masseuse, Felix Kersten, that his present work would end in "the greatest piece of colonization which the world will ever have seen."[184] Around this time, the prospective German beneficiaries of Himmler's colonial ambitions invested, as perhaps best captured by Götz Aly, great hope in his success: "By 1942 German children were staging imaginary gunfights on the 'black soil' of central Russia, while hundreds of thousands of soldiers' wives dreamed of owning country estates in Ukraine."[185] German authors Thea Haupt and Ilse Mau soon contemplated the writing of a primer designed to "acquaint small children with the ideas behind the settlement plan and transfer the cowboys-and-Indians romanticisms [of the American West] to Eastern Europe."[186]

A week or so after Himmler delivered his end-of-year deadline, Treblinka, the third and most "perfect" of Wirth's three extermination

centers, was completed.[187] This center was to be managed by another ex-T4 employee, Irmfried Eberl, a medical doctor who was also present at the euthanasia gassing pilot. According to Unterscharführer August Hingst, who worked at Treblinka, Eberl's ambition, somewhat like that of the highly competitive Jeckeln, was to kill as many people as possible, and certainly more than the other two centers.[188] Eberl's strategy to achieve this goal seems to have been to solicit and accept more victims than both Wirth at Belzec and Stangl at Sobibor, to have the gas chambers running almost continuously, to dump the bodies in mass graves dug mechanically by an industrial scoop shovel, and, finally, to simply hope the center's staff and facilities were able to sustain a frightfully high rate of killing. Eberl boldly accepted 312,500 potential victims in Treblinka's first five weeks of operation.[189] However, as Eberl discovered, although Treblinka was the most "perfect" of the three Operation Reinhard facilities, it was not absolutely perfect. The commandant's ambitions exceeded the extermination center's ability to absorb such massive numbers of civilians, and a backlog of freight cars crammed with Jews started to accumulate outside the camp gates. With no access to water, many of the Jews simply perished in the intense summer heat.

Simultaneously, the high summer temperatures also started to cause problems at Sobibor and Belzec. Much like at Chełmno, the recently buried bodies started to bloat, causing the thin surfaces of the camps' mass graves to burst open. Sobibor worker Leon Feldhendler described the scene. "After gassing, the people were laid into the graves. Then, out of the soil, blood and bad odor of gas began to surface; terrible smells spread over the whole camp, penetrating everything. The water in Sobibor became rancid."[190] Blobel's recent discoveries of the most effective mass outdoor cremation techniques were passed on to Globocnik, who introduced them to all three of the Operation Reinhard camps.[191] For example, according to Feldhendler, at Sobibor a large pit was dug "with a roaster above it. The bodies were thrown on the roaster. The fire was ignited from beneath, and petrol was poured on the corpses. The bones were crushed into ashes with hammers…."[192] Burning so many bodies, however, was a time-consuming task that generated a major bottleneck in the otherwise smooth-flowing system. The rate of killing declined. As all other camps would soon discover, maximum killing capacity greatly exceeded the on-site ability to both efficiently and hygienically dispose of victims' bodies.

Eberl at Treblinka, however, was unwilling to slow down, and chaos soon reined throughout the camp. Before long, the extermination center's tight security measures deteriorated to the point where escapes became common.[193] These security breaches quickly attracted the attention of Globocnik and Wirth who, upon seeing the camp in disarray, dismissed the overly ambitious Eberl. Eberl was replaced with the more reliable Stangl (while Franz Reichleitner, another ex-T4 employee, took over at the smaller Sobibor center). Even so, the 210,000[194] or 280,000[195] lives Treblinka extinguished in just its first five weeks of operation meant the latest Nazi extermination center had flexed its genocidal muscle.[196] Eberl was not exaggerating when he earlier wrote in a letter to his wife, "The pace in Treblinka is truly breathtaking."[197] As survivor Abraham Krzepicki put it, the mass slaughter at Treblinka resembled "A factory of horror whose sole product was bodies."[198]

Nevertheless, the problems at Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka put Himmler's end-of-year deadline in jeopardy. Globocnik and Wirth were aware that, just like at Belzec, the killing capacity of the gas chambers at both Sobibor and Treblinka had to be increased. Consequently, they needed to build additional or completely new and much larger gas chambers. Plans to expand, however, generated new problems that also threatened the achievement of Himmler's deadline. Larger chambers at Belzec and Sobibor had to be filled with sufficiently lethal quantities of exhaust fumes. This not only meant increased fuel costs but also that victims would take longer to die. The new and much larger gas chambers could, therefore, generate financial and temporal inefficiencies. At Treblinka, however, the cumulative improvements that often come with the application of goal-directed means-to-end rationality saw the elimination of these problems with a single innovation. There, simply lowering the ceiling height of the new set of gas chambers by 60 cm both increased killing efficiency and lowered fuel costs. With less space to fill with sufficiently lethal concentrations of exhaust fumes, this innovation reduced the asphyxiation time and thus decreased the amount of time before bodies could be removed.[199] The three camps' new and larger gas chambers all produced massive increases in killing efficiency. According to Yitzhak Arad, the number of victims per gassing in the new chambers at Belzec and Sobibor doubled. At Treblinka, it may have quadrupled (Table 6.1).[200]

At his trial following the war, Franz Stangl admitted, when asked about the second period of exterminations at Treblinka, that, "the

Table 6.1 The rate of killing at Operation Reinhard extermination camps[a]

| | First period of exterminations | | | | Reconstruction | Second period of exterminations | | | |
	Duration	*Number of gas chambers*	*Number of persons per chamber*	*Number of victims*	*Dates*	*Duration*	*Number of gas chambers*	*Number of persons per chamber*	*Total number of victims*
Belzec	17 March–June 1942	3	150–200	100,000	May/June 1942	21 July 1942–January 1943	6	200–250	600,000
Sobibor	16 May–July 1942	3	140–160	90,000	September/October 1942	October 1942–October 1943	6	200–250	240,000
Treblinka	23 July–28 August 1942	3	450–600	215,000	August/September 1942	September 1942–October 1943	10	200–250	700,000

[a]Adam (1989, p. 146)

optimum amount of people gassed in one day, I can state: according to my estimation a transport of thirty freight cars with 3,000 people was liquidated in three hours. When the work lasted for about fourteen hours, 12,000 to 15,000 people were annihilated."[201]

Operation Reinhard not only met Himmler's end-of-year deadline by exterminating all the Jews in the General Government,[202] but was also expanded to include the Jews of Bialystok and the Ostland.[203] On 12 February 1943, Himmler once again visited Sobibor.[204] One month later, on 13 April 1943, Globocnik successfully pushed for Wirth to be promoted to SS-Sturmbannführer or Major.[205] At the end of Operation Reinhard in late October 1943, 1,500,000–1,700,000 Jews had been murdered.[206] Approximately 600,000 were killed at Belzec,[207] 250,000 at Sobibor,[208] and between 700,000 and 800,000 at Treblinka.[209] Operation Reinhard also proved highly profitable: After deportation and extermination costs, it has conservatively been estimated that almost 179 million Reichsmarks were diverted into the Nazi coffers[210]—money then pumped into the Nazi war machine.[211] And unlike the labor-intensive mass shootings, "these three huge extermination factories in which approximately one-third of all Nazi genocide victims were murdered, were never operated by more than a little over 100 German camp officials."[212] Belzec, for example, required several hundred worker Jews, a hundred or so Ukrainians, and just 20 Germans (many in distant managerial roles).[213] Such efficiency depended greatly on the total compliance of the victims themselves. A closer look at Belzec's standard operating procedure reveals how the compliance of most victims was secured.

On 19 August 1942, hygienist professor Wilhelm Pfannenstiel of the SS, armed with a stopwatch, observed Belzec's carefully organized killing process:

> After they had undressed, the whole procedure went fairly quickly. They ran naked from the hut through a hedge into the actual extermination centre. The whole extermination centre looked just like a normal delousing institution. In front of the building there were pots of geraniums and a sign saying 'Hackenholt Foundation', above which there was a Star of David. The building was brightly and pleasantly painted so as not to suggest that people would be killed here. From what I saw, I do not believe that the people who had just arrived had any idea of what would happen to them. Inside the building, the Jews had to enter chambers into which was channeled the exhaust of a [100(?)]-HP engine, located in the same building.[214]

According to survivor Rudolf Reder, two Russian staff members operated the engine.[215] In Pfannenstiel's view, once locked in, "it was only then that the people sensed something else was in store for them. It seemed to me that behind the thick walls and door they were praying and shouting for help. After about twelve minutes it became silent in the chambers."[216] In another account, Pfannenstiel stated it took eighteen minutes for the victims to die. Whether it was twelve or eighteen minutes, he still "found it especially cruel" that it took so long.[217] Whether by accident or design, Pfannenstiel believed that the gas chambers' new strain resolving "thick" concrete walls helped muffle (reduce) the intensity of the victims' screams. Before the victims were removed and cremated, a Jewish work detail stripped the bodies of anything of potential value, particularly gold teeth and any hidden valuables.

To encourage the victims at Belzec to enter the gas chambers of their own accord, the perpetrators relied on certain tried-and-tested tricks of deception, including the installation of fake showerheads (as at the T4 institutions) and promising the victims work on the condition that they undergo delousing (as at Chełmno). With its pleasantly painted buildings and strategically placed geranium pots designed to alleviate victims' fears that they had arrived at a death camp, Belzec also developed some of its own techniques of deception. As survivor Ada Lichtman notes, similar tricks were used at both Sobibor and Treblinka:

> We heard word for word how SS-Oberscharführer Michel, standing on a small table, convincingly calmed the people; he promised them that after the bath they would get back all their possessions, and he said that the time had come for Jews to become productive members of society. They would presently all be sent to the Ukraine, where they would be able to live and work. The speech inspired confidence and enthusiasm among the people. They applauded spontaneously, and occasionally they even danced and sang.[218]

One survivor observed that at Sobibor this speech was, much like at Chełmno, delivered by a German wearing the white coat of a medical doctor.[219] Another technique of deception was that after arriving, some victims were coerced into writing postcards to their relatives, informing them of the apparently auspicious outcome of their journey to the East: They said the Germans treated them well and there was food, shelter, and employment.[220] Obviously, all these tricks were designed to ensure an unencumbered flow of docile victims into the camps.

Some of those Jews lucky enough to escape returned to the ghettos to warn others of the impending danger. Word soon spread, and for those Jews forcibly transferred by train to unknown destinations, words like "Belzec," "Sobibor," and especially "Treblinka" became signals of imminent death. Increasingly, Jews arriving at the extermination centers were no longer easily duped by the "showers" or the promises of work. Growing numbers of victims refused to comply with their executioners' requests and some engaged in spontaneous acts of resistance. Probably, the earliest significant and verified act of resistance occurred at Treblinka. In the second week of December 1942, a group of youths from the Kelbasin camp refused to enter the gas chambers. With fists, knives, and even a grenade, they resisted. A riot ensued, but with superior firepower the guards rapidly quelled the resisters, resulting in massive carnage.[221]

Wirth and Stangl feared such resistance because it not only endangered their own lives but also removed a key ingredient that enabled them to inflict death on such a massive scale—victim docility. Sharing much in common with Jeckeln's shooting process, the gassing operations from start to finish required that victims remain totally compliant, because any resistance would create bottlenecks in the system,[222] which would threaten the achievement of Himmler's ambitious goals and tight deadlines. In Ritzer's terminology, victim docility provided the Germans with greater "control" over the flow of the process, which enhanced "predictability," whereby it became possible to anticipate the weekly output of bodies. As the ability to predict increased, "calculability" became possible, allowing managers like Himmler to set ambitious, but not unrealistic, production targets by calculating the output of bodies expected over a certain number of weeks. And to achieve Himmler's targets, every week a certain minimum number of people needed to be killed.[223] Just two weeks after the revolt at Treblinka, Stangl introduced more sophisticated techniques of deception in order to reinstate the essential ingredient of victim docility.

AT CHRISTMAS 1942 Stangl ordered the construction of the fake railway station. A clock (with painted numerals and hands which never moved, but no one was thought likely to notice this), ticket-windows, various timetables and arrows indicating train connections 'To Warsaw,' 'To Wolwonoce,' and 'To Bialystock' were painted on to the façade of the 'sorting barracks'; all for the purpose of lulling the arriving transports – an increasing number of whom were to be from the West – into a belief that they had arrived in a genuine transit camp.[224]

Another technique of deception appeared just 40 meters from the gas chambers where,

> a small musical ensemble stood under a tree. Three Jews with yellow patches, three musicians from Stock, stood and played there on their instruments. […] They played enthusiastically. It was difficult to make out their repertoire…these were apparently the latest hit songs favored by the Germans and Ukrainians.[225]

Much like the pleasant pots of geraniums, this cheerful ensemble suggested anything but a death camp. However, it seems the main purpose of the music was to "drown out the victims' screams on their way to the gas chambers…so that they would not be heard throughout the camp…."[226] An orchestra was also present at Sobibor,[227] where, according to survivor Mirjam Penha-Blits, the latest musical hits could be heard "blasting out…" of loudspeakers.[228]

Just how successful these deceptions were is unclear. What is clear is that they served to intensify the concerns of members of the camps' Jewish work details, who were ever mindful of their precarious existence. With more time than new arrivals to plot, plan, arm, and identify weaknesses within the system, it was working Jews who posed the greatest threat to Operation Reinhard. Two major revolts instigated by Jewish underground organizations ended in escapes. The first occurred on 2 August 1943 at Treblinka, which facilitated the escape of a small number of prisoners and the deaths of many. Half-a-month later, on 19 August 1943, Treblinka was closed.[229] The second major revolt occurred at Sobibor on 14 October 1943 and ended in significant staff casualties and many escapes.[230] Along with meticulous planning and near-perfect execution, a major contributing factor to the success of this revolt was that German staff broke an all-important camp rule. As Richard Glazor, one of the escapees, explained,

> The idea [to revolt] was almost ripe back in November 1942. Beginning in November '42, we'd noticed…that we were being "spared," in quotes. We noticed it and we also learned that Stangl [*sic* Franz Reichleitner], the commandant, wanted, for efficiency's sake, to hang on to men who were already trained specialists in the various jobs: sorters, corpse haulers, barbers who cut the women's hair, and so on. This in fact is what later gave us the chance to prepare, to organize the uprising.[231]

At other camps, Jewish workers were periodically executed and replaced with new workers as per instructions, thus reducing the risk of revolt. But at Sobibor this rule was ignored. Five days after this successful revolt, on 19 October 1943, it was decided to close and dismantle Operation Reinhard, which had already achieved both its original and most of its new objectives.[232]

This somewhat premature shutdown, however, left a few tasks remaining. How, for example, was Himmler to erase the last official trace of Jews in the General Government, who, due to their better physical condition, had been selected to work in various commercial and military enterprises (the majority of whom were at the Majdanek, Poniatowa, and Trawniki labor camps)? Himmler moved quickly and with stealth because if these surviving Jews caught wind of the successful revolt at Sobibor, it was feared they might be inspired to act similarly.[233] Without industrial-sized gas chambers to do his dirty work, the safest option was to have these workers shot. With the help of SS and Police Leader Friedrich-Wilhelm Krüger, Himmler hatched Operation Harvest Festival (or Erntefest). The first stage of this operation involved instructing management at all three labor camps to have their prisoners dig zigzag trenches in fields close to the camp boundaries (ostensibly for defensive military purposes). Then, on 3 November 1943, several thousand police and SS men simultaneously surrounded the camps. Using Jeckeln's Babi Yar model, over the next two days the Jews were stripped of their clothes and forced toward the trenches through heavily armed cordons of police and SS men. Then, they were systematically shot in the trenches. The victims who followed were to stack themselves like sardines on top of those shot before them. By the end of the second day, 43,000 Jews had been shot in the largest mass shooting of civilians undertaken by Germans during World War Two.[234] Arad explains what happened next at Trawniki.

> A group of 100-120 Jews from the Milejow camp (east of Lublin) were brought to cremate the corpses of the murdered. After two or three weeks, when they finished the cremating work, they were also shot. They were shot in small groups, and each group had to cremate the corpses of the previous group. The last group was cremated by the Ukrainian guards.[235]

The men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 participated in Operation Harvest Festival. However, these "ordinary" Germans only performed

cordon and transport duties.[236] For a big job like "Majdanek and Poniatowa during Erntefest, the Security Police of Lublin furnished the shooters." These ordinary yet no doubt capable Germans, having risen to the top of Himmler's attrition process, were, according to Browning, killing "specialists."[237]

CONCLUSION

This chapter traces a "rational" journey in mass murder that started out as pilot studies and rapidly expanded into a carefully calculated, continuously improving, and ultimately successful attempt to murder all the "useless mouths" in the General Government. Between late 1941 and mid-1942, a journey of discovery took place among a competitive group of specialists that generated rapid advances across all four components of a rationalized system: increased control, calculability, predictability, and efficiency (along with a movement from human to more non-human technology). That is, after gradually developing a standardized set of mostly non-human cordon/security measures—sealed, electrified, and barb-wired perimeters, minefield buffer zones, 24 hour armed security towers, regular Jewish worker rotations—and relying on a variety of equally controlling techniques of deception, eventually one innovator—Christian Wirth—managed to invent a virtually inescapable and highly efficient assembly-line process of mass murder. The key to the success of Wirth's veritable factory of death was the uncanny ability of his system to efficiently convert a constant, calculable, and therefore predictable flow of docile victims into dead bodies.

Wirth's journey of discovery shares much in common with Jeckeln's. Much like the shooting campaign, the "twisted road" from Lange's gas vans through to the construction of the Treblinka extermination camp exhibited initially low rates of killing, top-down pressure to increase those rates, the application of formal rationality from the bottom-up (increased experimentation, bureaucratization, and the honing of a less stressful industrialized killing process), resulting in increased kill rates that only served to stimulate new top-down pressures to kill more Jews— thus occasioning an ever-expanding cycle of destruction. A key commonality between both murder campaigns was an interactive relationship between top-down and bottom-up forces whereby, as Matthäus observes, "[n]ot only did those committing mass murder learn by doing, but their top commanders and those in planning positions learned as well."[238]

The key distinguishing feature separating the murder campaigns was that Wirth's "one best way" of killing civilians was more successful than Jeckeln's largely because Wirth developed a more impersonal, less public, less labor intensive, and more industrial and organized means of mass extermination. Consequently, unlike the shooting squads who balked over killing certain types of victims, Wirth and his fellow ex-T4 gassing experts revealed an uncanny and unparalleled knack for killing without complaint any civilians sent their way: Gypsies, Reich Jews, the elderly, women, children, even babies. When Wirth scaled all the weighty psychological obstacles associated with killing civilians and refined his frightfully efficient killing process, he toppled Jeckeln from his star innovator role in Nazi Jewish policy. Wirth became *the* solution to the Nazi regime's seemingly unresolvable and expanding "Jewish problem."

But in the Nazis' competitive bureaucracy where entrepreneurial functionaries constantly tried to outdo one another, Wirth's elevated status did not last long. Operation Reinhard gassing factories were only designed to exterminate people unable to work. Few of these victims were lined up as working fodder for the German war effort or broader economy. However, as discussed at the Wannsee Conference, for all the other Jews in Western and Central Europe who had not experienced the starvation conditions endured by those entrapped in the Polish ghettos, the Nazis' flagging military fortunes meant that a camp of dual purpose—elimination through work and, for non-workers, immediate extermination—was now needed. This more productive, yet still highly destructive work and death camp would become the new most "perfect" solution. It was called Auschwitz-Birkenau. Destruction with far greater efficiency was about to be perfected.

Notes

1. Lifton (1986, p. 89).
2. Evans (2004, p. 17).
3. Adam (1989, p. 138). According to Hayes (2017, p. 121), Galen's brave protest, however, did not extend to Germany's Jews, whom he believed to be "dangerous agents of modernity and Bolshevism."
4. Johnson (1999).
5. Friedlander (1995, p. 111) and Lifton (1986, p. 95). The so-called wild and children's euthanasia program continued throughout the war (Montague 2012, pp. 10, 13).

6. Longerich (2010, p. 254).
7. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 69). Becker repeated this statement when terminally ill and no longer facing prosecution (see Browning 1985, p. 31).
8. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 69).
9. Arad (1987, p. 11).
10. MacLean (1999, pp. 15–16).
11. Quoted in Spektor (1993, pp. 60–61).
12. Quoted in Spektor (1993, p. 70). See also Adam (1989, p. 141).
13. Quoted in Arad et al. (1999, p. 420).
14. Rhodes (2002, p. 155).
15. Quoted in Spektor (1993, p. 61).
16. Quoted in Spektor (1993, p. 61).
17. Quoted in Rhodes (2002, p. 259).
18. Quoted in Spektor (1993, p. 55).
19. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 70).
20. Browning (1985, p. 64).
21. Quoted in Spektor (1993, p. 69). See also Langerbein (2004, p. 171).
22. When the choice to use gas vans or firearms is viewed from this perspective, an otherwise perplexing observation from Lucy Dawidowicz (1990, p. 176) suddenly makes greater sense: "In spring 1942 gas vans became more available to Einsatzgruppen, but whether or not they were used was a matter of individual taste. Höss, a man of schizophrenic sensibility, preferred gassing to shooting because he was "spared all these bloodbaths." In contrast, an Einsatzkommando chief held that an execution by shooting was "more honourable for both parties than killing by means of a gas truck." Höss, it would seem, concerned himself only with alleviating his men's stress, whereas for the Einsatzkommando chief shooting was, in a warped military sense, more honorable (perhaps because the shooters would likely pay a psychological price for taking their victims' lives).
23. Quoted in Naumann (1966, p. 46).
24. Adam (1989, pp. 140–141).
25. Hilberg (1961a, p. 219). See also Chrostowski (2004, p. 8).
26. See van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 293) and Cesarani (2016, p. 424).
27. Cesarani (2016, p. 424).
28. Cesarani (2016, p. 432).
29. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 294).
30. Cesarani (2016, p. 424) argues that Greiser's "consent was conditional on getting carte blanche to make room for the western Jews by removing 100,000 'sick' Polish Jews."
31. In support of this, soon afterward Łódź ghetto administrator Hans Biebow regularly attended the evacuation of Wartheland Jews from their

smaller villages and towns, where he undertook selections of workers and non-workers. The former were transported to factories in the Łódź ghetto and the latter were sent off to be exterminated (Montague 2012, p. 72).

32. Montague (2012, pp. 40, 47).
33. Montague (2012, pp. 40–43, 46).
34. Gilbert (1986, pp. 219–221).
35. Montague (2012, pp. 43, 46–47).
36. Montague (2012, p. 44).
37. Quoted in Montague (2012, p. 44).
38. Quoted in Montague (2012, p. 45).
39. Quoted in Montague (2012, p. 45).
40. See Montague (2012, p. 45).
41. Browning (1985, p. 30).
42. Montague (2012, p. 47).
43. Browning (1985, pp. 30, 63).
44. Montague (2012, pp. 49, 51).
45. Montague (2012, p. 61).
46. Montague (2012, p. 49).
47. Consider, for example, Oberscharführer Fritz Swoboda, who received "a 12 marks bonus" for mass shootings he undertook in Czechoslovakia (quoted in Neitzel and Welzer 2012, p. 126).
48. Krakowski (2009, p. 34). Montague (2012, p. 57) puts the Lange Commando's bonus at 10 Reichsmarks per day, with the commandant receiving 15 Reichsmarks per day. Hayes (2017, p. 134) suggests German death camp workers received an extra 18 Reichsmarks per day, among other bonuses.
49. Montague (2012, p. 57).
50. Quoted in Montague (2012, p. 56).
51. Montague (2012, pp. 55–56). During the mass shooting campaign, some Einsatzgruppen forces would approach the Wehrmacht and request they "merely provide security," but then later drew them further into the execution process (see Beorn 2014, pp. 72, 76–77).
52. Quoted in Krakowski (2009, p. 40).
53. Montague (2012, p. 57).
54. Kühl (2016, p. 90).
55. Kühl (2016, p. 125).
56. Kühl (2016, p. 41).
57. Browning (1985, p. 30).
58. Montague (2012, p. 54).
59. Krakowski (2009, p. 36) and Montague (2012, p. 64).
60. Montague (2012, p. 65).
61. Krakowski (1993, p. 91).

62. Montague (2012, p. 65).
63. Montague (2012, p. 66). Using gas to deal with the "Gypsy problem" obviously proved more popular than the method suggested by racial scientist Robert Ritter. During the winter of 1941/1942, Ritter proposed at an academic conference that the Nazis send ships into the Mediterranean loaded with Gypsies (about 30,000 passengers each) and then bomb them (Müller-Hill 1988, p. 59).
64. Browning (2004a, p. 418), Montague (2012, p. 205), Schelvis (2007, p. 18).
65. Quoted in Matthäus (2004, p. 300).
66. It is true that, as a group, the Jews only made up a small proportion of the Nazi's potential slave-labor pool, especially compared to, say, the far more numerous non-Jewish Poles. Nonetheless, the Jews were still a source of slave labor under the hegemony of a group who were no longer in a position to be fussy.
67. Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 260).
68. Cesarani (2016, p. 454) and Hayes (2017, p. 124). Also, the original meeting location was not at the Wannsee lakeside villa (Cesarani 2016, p. 454).
69. Cesarani (2016, pp. 454–455).
70. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 275).
71. Quoted in Roseman (2002, p. 100).
72. Friedländer (2007, p. 340).
73. Longerich (2012, p. 555).
74. Quoted in Friedländer (2007, p. 340).
75. Quoted in Friedländer (2007, p. 340).
76. Quoted in Friedländer (2007, p. 340). See also Longerich (2012, pp. 555–556).
77. Hayes (2017, p. 164).
78. Quoted in Browning (1978, p. 78).
79. Marcuse (2001, p. 41). The origins of this idea trace back to Einsatzgruppe C in September 1941 (Longerich 2010, pp. 314–315).
80. Friedländer (2007, p. 341).
81. Cesarani (2004, p. 301). The last part of the minutes states, "in conclusion the various possible kinds of solution were discussed" (quoted in Roseman 2002, p. 103). See also Friedländer (2007, p.142).
82. Angrick and Klein (2009, p. 261). Having said this, had Friedrich-Wilhelm Krüger attended the Wannsee Conference instead of sending his assistant, he too would have had experience in such matters.
83. Fleming (1984, p. 94).
84. "…Lange was … doubtless invited by Heydrich to the conference … to describe his practical experiences with the Final Solution to the other participants gathered … at Grosser Wannsee" (Fleming 1984, p. 93).

Padfield (1990) also concludes, "it is difficult to understand why Lange was there or why the conference had to be postponed for him unless he was to explain the practicalities of liquidation" (p. 357).

85. It can be assumed that due to Lange's central role in Riga, he would have known about the plan to send gas vans to Riga (an initiative that, due to Wetzel's previously mentioned 25 October 1941 letter to Lohse about Brack setting up gassing camps in Riga and Minsk, traced back three months before the Wannsee Conference).

86. Longerich (2010, p. 292).

87. Quoted in Dawidowicz (1990, p. 176).

88. Fleming (1984, p. 110).

89. See Browning (2004a, p. 419). Longerich (2010, p. 263) argues Eichmann arrived later in the spring of 1942. Montague (2012, p. 94) only states that Eichmann visited Chełmno "[s]hortly after the camp began operations…."

90. See von Lang (1982, p. 71, as cited in Adam 1989, p. 142), with Fleming (1984, p. 74) stating that, "before the end of 1941, Müller again sent Eichmann out for an extermination camp report, this time to Kulmhof (Chelmno)…."

91. Quoted in von Lang (1983, p. 77–78, as cited in Montague 2012, p. 95).

92. Quoted in Arad (1987, pp. 12–13).

93. A month before the Wannsee Conference, "Hans Frank admitted, when speaking in mid-December 1941 of the need to liquidate the Jews of the *Generalgouvernement*, that he did not know how this could be done: 'We can't shoot these 3.5 Million Jews,' he declared, 'we can't poison them, but will have somehow to take steps leading somehow to a success in annihilation (*Vernichtungserfolg*) in connection with the large-scale measures under discussion by the Reich'" (Kershaw 2000, p. 128).

94. Quoted in Roseman (2002, p. 102).

95. Quoted in Krausnick and Broszat (1970, p. 228).

96. Quoted in Longerich (2012, p. 560).

97. Quoted in Longerich (2012, p. 560).

98. Benz (1999, pp. 72–73).

99. Quoted in Krakowski (1993, pp. 74–75).

100. Adam (1989, p. 142).

101. As one T4 physician wrote in his 1940 letter of resignation from the euthanasia program, "despite my intellectual understanding and good will, I cannot help stating that I am temperamentally not fitted for this […] I prefer to see clearly and to recognize that I am too gentle for this work than to disappoint you later" (quoted in Glover 1999, p. 347).

102. Montague (2012, p. 76).

103. Montague (2012, pp. 56, 57, 67, 68, 69).

104. Montague (2012, pp. 61, 69).
105. Montague (2012, p. 76).
106. Quoted in Krakowski (1993, p. 83).
107. Montague (2012, p. 77).
108. Montague (2012, p. 76).
109. Montague (2012, p. 76).
110. Quoted in Krakowski (1993, p. 84).
111. Quoted in Krakowski (1993, p. 84).
112. Initially, the Polish prisoners may have felt they had little choice but to help the Germans, but as they became more implicated in the killing process, they gained the appearance of trusted collaborators (see Montague 2012, pp. 58–60). As one Pole, Henryk Maliczak, conceded: "we were on friendly terms with the Germans. They considered us employees [*pracownicy*]. The German administrators of the camp never spoke to us about the possibility of escape. Besides, as far as I know, none of us had any intention of escaping. Moreover, we were never threatened that our family would have a problem if one of us escaped. Objectively speaking, we had it pretty good" (quoted in Montague 2012, p. 58).
113. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 218).
114. Quoted in Krakowski (1993, p. 86).
115. Montague (2012, p. 206). If vans driven through the streets with the sounds of screaming people coming from their rear cabins failed to alert the local community to the camp's purpose (unlikely), the time one van's back door swung open on route and the bodies of dying victims sprawled out across the street certainly would have (see Montague 2012, p. 94). Also, over drinks the Polish collaborators informed the locals what was taking place in their midst (Montague 2012, p. 59).
116. Montague (2012, p. 79).
117. Krakowski (1993, p. 84).
118. Quoted in Krakowski (1993, p. 87).
119. Krakowski (1993, p. 77).
120. Montague (2012, pp. 113–114).
121. Montague (2012, p. 114).
122. Montague (2012, p. 111).
123. Quoted in Krakowski (1993, p. 87).
124. Montague (2012, p. 60).
125. Montague (2012, pp. 98–99, 112).
126. Montague (2012, p. 60). In conflict with the assertion that Germans avoided the more horrific tasks, one survivor notes that at Chełmno, "two German civilians approached and carried out a thorough search of the corpses, looking for valuables. They tore off necklaces, pulled rings

off fingers, pulled out gold teeth. They even looked in the anuses and, with the women, genitalia" (quoted in Cesarani 2016, p. 462).

127. Quoted in Krakowski (1993, p. 89).
128. Montague (2012, pp. 53–54).
129. Arad (1987, p. 11), Krakowski (1993, p. 84), Montague (2012, pp. 93, 107, 162).
130. Montague (2012, p. 78).
131. Having said this, on 5 June 1942 the RSHA estimated that it would take six years for 30 gas vans to exterminate all 11 million of Europe's Jews (Müller-Hill 1988, p. 48).
132. Montague (2012, p. 67).
133. Montague (2012, p. 67).
134. Montague (2012, p. 68)
135. Cesarani (2016, p. 465).
136. Montague (2012, p. 68).
137. Montague (2012, p. 114).
138. Arad (1987, p. 170).
139. Somewhat like Milgram, Himmler failed to consider that with time power always changes and those who previously abused their positions of greater power are later sometimes required to explain themselves. Once abusers of power realize this, they are often tempted, as both Milgram and Himmler were, to engage in cover-ups. For example, after Baumrind's (1964) critique of his research, Milgram never published his incomparably unethical Relationship condition (as he had earlier promised) and also told a variety of lies about his data collection process (see Perry 2012; Russell 2014). And as the Red Army moved west, Himmler attempted to eliminate evidence of his crimes.
140. Rubenstein and Roth (1987, p. 151).
141. See Arad (1987, pp. 170–171).
142. Arad (1987, p. 171).
143. Montague (2012, p. 185).
144. Montague (2012, p. 188).
145. Hilberg (1961b, p. 84).
146. Montague (2012, p. 3).
147. Browning (2004b, pp. 188–189).
148. Cesarani argues Himmler may have approached Globocnik (2016, p. 468).
149. Quoted in Musial (2000, p.115, as cited in Lower 2002, p. 2). See also Longerich (2012, p. 547). As Cesarani (2016, p. 468) notes, "the decisions that led to this human cataclysm are obscure."

150. Musial (2002, p. 195; 2000, pp. 113, as cited in Kühl 2016, p. 139). Globocnik's initial plan in building Belzec may also have been motivated by his concern over political security (Longerich 2012, p. 547).
151. Longerich (2010, p. 295).
152. Browning (2004b, p. 189).
153. Quoted in Arad (1987, p. 17). As Friedlander argues, "In September of 1941 Philipp Bouhler and Viktor Brack visited Globocnik in Lublin. Although at Nuremberg Brack denied that this visit had anything to do with the Final Solution, it seems likely that they discussed their future collaboration" (1994, p. 54).
154. Krausnick (1968, p. 97).
155. Hayes (2017, pp. 121–122).
156. Browning (2004b, p. 189).
157. Adam (1989, p. 138).
158. Longerich (2010, p. 280).
159. Arad (1987, p. 24). Benz (1999, p. 144) suggests that Wirth worked at Chełmno and Chrostowski (2004, pp. 6–7) and Padfield (1990, p. 372) go further, arguing he co-designed and helped build the center. Then again, Montague (2012) makes no mention of any connections between Wirth and Chełmno.
160. Arad (1993, p. 107).
161. Dawidowicz (1990, p. 175).
162. Quoted in Arad (1993, pp. 107–108).
163. Quoted in Lanzmann (1995, p. 53).
164. Arad (1987, p. 26).
165. Arad (1993, p. 109).
166. Arad (1987, p. 26). The transition from canisters to motor-generated exhaust fumes may have been more complicated than outlined here. According to Polish worker Stanislaw Kozak, the long-term intention at Belzec was to use carbon monoxide gas produced by large coal furnaces, which he installed but were, at some point, obviously replaced (Schelvis 2007, p. 98). Perhaps because this innovation failed to prove effective, no coal furnaces were installed at the next and "improved" Sobibor extermination camp (p. 100).
167. Browning (1998, p. xv).
168. Pohl (1993, as cited in Friedländer 1997, p. 284). See also Longerich (2012, p. 547).
169. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 228).
170. Arad (1987, p. 23).
171. Arad (1987, p. 30). In conflict with this, Kershaw (2000, p. 129) argues that it was not until late April and early May 1942 that it became clear to all involved that Wirth's plan to build three industrial-sized

extermination camps in the General Government was likely to be a highly lethal "success." Consequently, it was also around this point in time that Globocnik was given the green light to try and exterminate all the Jews in the General Government (Kershaw 2000, p. 129). But why would the green light for Operation Reinhard come a month or two after construction at Sobibor had started? The go-ahead for the wider project by higher-ups surely came before late April.

172. Cesarani (2016, p. 470).
173. Schelvis (2007, p. 28).
174. Arad (1993, p. 122).
175. Stangl as cited in Schelvis (2007, p. 33).
176. Adam (1989, p. 146). Arad (1987, p. 123) puts the figure at 600 per gassing.
177. Arad (1987, p. 123).
178. Arad (1993, p. 122).
179. Adam (1989, p. 146) and Arad (1993, p. 122).
180. Cesarani (2016, p. 468).
181. See van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 313).
182. Adam (1989, p. 146) and Arad (1987, p. 80).
183. Quoted in Arad (1987, p. 47). See also Bloxham and Kushner (2005, p. 136).
184. Quoted in van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 313). Then again, apparently Kersten was not the most reliable of sources (Kershaw 2000, p. 113).
185. Aly (2006, p. 31).
186. Quoted in Aly (2006, p. 31). Bolstering the German's patronizing view toward Eastern European "natives," as Hitler said in mid-September 1941 to his inner circle: "We'll give the Ukrainians head scarves, glass jewelry, and everything else colonized peoples like" (quoted in Aly 2006, p. 116).
187. Arad (1993, p. 115).
188. Quoted in Arad (1987, p. 87).
189. Arad (1987, p. 87).
190. Quoted in Arad (1987, p. 172).
191. Arad (1987, p. 171).
192. Quoted in Arad (1987, p. 172). See also Schelvis (2007, pp. 99–100).
193. Arad (1987, p. 87; 1993, p. 127).
194. Adam (1989, p. 146).
195. Hayes (2017, p. 127).
196. See also Arad (1993, p. 127).
197. Quoted in Friedlander (1995, p. 299).
198. Quoted in Arad (1987, p. 94).
199. Arad (1993, p. 132).

200. Arad (1987, pp. 73–74, 123) estimates that the killing capacity of the new chambers at Belzec and Sobibor was about 2000 and 1300 per gassing cycle, respectively. And Treblinka's knew chambers were capable of killing about 2300 or 3800 per gassing (pp. 119–120). Adam (1989) provides more conservative estimates.
201. Quoted in Arad (1987, pp. 120–121). See also Adam (1989, p. 146).
202. Arad (1987, p. 130).
203. Arad (1987, pp. 131, 165).
204. Schelvis (2007, pp. 93–94).
205. Schelvis (2007, p. 36).
206. Arad (1993, p. 137) and Arad (1987, p. 165).
207. Hilberg (2003, p. 1320) provides the lower figure of 434,508 at Belzec.
208. Sobibor had fewer victims than Belzec and Treblinka because it was the first extermination center to introduce cremation facilities and the first to be closed down. There were also periods when Sobibor's railway line could not be used to transport victims because it had either been closed for repairs or was prioritized for military transports (Adam 1989, p. 146). Schelvis (2007, pp. 28–29, 47–48, 103–104) more specifically notes that Sobibor, unlike Belzec and Treblinka, only had access to a single railway line that also ran through a marshland. In the summer, the line was damaged by subsidence and frequently needed repairs. This difference in infrastructure and conditions largely explains why Sobibor was not nearly as destructive at the other two camps.
209. Hilberg (1980, p. 93).
210. Hayes (2017, p. 131).
211. Aly (2006, p. 285).
212. de Mildt (1996, p. 16).
213. Rees (2005, pp. 149–150).
214. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 241).
215. Schelvis (2007, p. 105).
216. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, pp. 242, 244).
217. Quoted in Patterson (2002, p. 133).
218. Quoted in Arad (1993, p. 122).
219. Schelvis (2007, p. 70).
220. Schelvis (2007, pp. 71, 122).
221. Arad (1987, pp. 254–256).
222. What mattered most in terms of the so-called Jeckeln schedule was "the continual flow" of victims (Angrick and Klein 2009, pp. 155, 149). One perpetrator's area of specialization "was to accelerate procedures during 'tie ups'" (p. 149). Victim docility was also an essential ingredient for killing efficiency during Jeckeln's mass shootings. Two subordinate figures in Jeckeln's ranks were well aware that "the success of the endeavor

depended on deceiving these 'half-starved, yammering figures' and preventing panic from ensuing" (p. 142).

223. As Stangl later implied: For the perpetrators, victim docility was a much more important ingredient than perpetrator hatred. In his words, "It has nothing to do with hate. They were so weak; they allowed everything to happen—to be done to them. They were people with whom there was no common ground, no possibility of communication—that is how contempt is born" (quoted in Sereny 1983, pp. 232–233, as cited in Markusen and Kopf 1995, p. 187). Thus, victim weakness promoted docility, and victim docility trumped the importance of perpetrator hatred.
224. Sereny (1974, p. 200). See also Arad (1987, pp. 122–123).
225. Arad (1987, p. 86).
226. Arad (1987, p. 86).
227. This is according to survivor Dov Freiberg (Arad 1987, p. 75).
228. Schelvis (2007, p. 74).
229. Arad (1993, pp. 136–137).
230. Arad (1987, pp. 322–341).
231. Quoted in Lanzmann (1995, pp. 148–149).
232. Arad (1993, p. 137).
233. See Marszałec (1986, pp. 130–131).
234. Arad (1987, pp. 365–369).
235. Arad (1987, p. 368).
236. Browning (1992, p. 163).
237. Browning (1992, p. 163). See also Benz (1999, pp. 141–142) and Marszałec (1986, pp. 130–134). Majdanek had a Zyklon-B gas chamber, so why was this not used for Operation Harvest Festival? According to survivor Jerzy Kwiatkowski "Only a relatively small number of people could be killed each day in the gas chamber" (quoted in Kranz 2007, p. 53). Although Majdanek only had a small gas chamber, it did have a fairly large crematorium. However, both facilities were located at different ends of the camp. Therefore, the setup was not conducive for the purposes of large-scale extermination and would have been of little use to Himmler (see Katz 2005, p. 416; Marszałec 1986, pp. 8–9). Perhaps even more importantly, Marszałec notes (without explanation) that the gas chambers in Majdanek only operated from September 1942 until September 1943, therefore before Operation Harvest Festival (p. 129). In conflict with this, Adam (1989, p. 153) suggests that Majdanek's gas chamber was closed down sometime in November 1943 (perhaps after Operation Harvest Festival). Although he adds, "A partial enigma remains concerning the methods used at Majdanek to gas the victims" (p. 152).
238. Matthäus (2007, p. 234).

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The Solution to the Jewish Question—Auschwitz-Birkenau

At face value, Operation Reinhard and the Auschwitz concentration camp system appear somewhat similar, the main common denominator being the goal of killing massive numbers of human beings. Having said that, a closer look reveals each was governed by different, discrete policy objectives: Operation Reinhard's policy was to kill all the "useless mouths" in the Polish ghettos while Auschwitz focused on extermination through work. Even so, as this chapter will show, Auschwitz moved toward its objective using the same mechanism as Operation Reinhard and, later, Milgram did—the application of intuition, past experience, and close observation of the pilot-testing process (all of which advanced efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control, along with a greater dependence on non-human technologies). With a more pronounced emphasis on industrialization, Auschwitz achieved its most significant "advancement"—the one that distinguished it most from other solutions to the "Jewish problem"—in the matter of the most powerful strain resolving mechanism of all—the means of inflicting harm.

Killing on an industrial scale distinguished Auschwitz in three main ways: efficiency, profitability, and (from the Nazi perspective) "humaneness." The Nazis, it seems, regarded the Auschwitz process as the most humane solution to the "Jewish problem" in two main ways. First, for the most directly involved perpetrators, Auschwitz was a relatively stress-free, and with the camp's high standard of living, pleasant place to work. Second, Auschwitz developed a standard operating procedure that the Nazis in and beyond the camp—including the German public cognizant

of the extermination campaign[1]—perceived as a gentle, even kind, way of killing other human beings on an unprecedented scale. Although it was neither of these, the process's designation as "most humane" seems to have eased many of the reservations that Nazi functionaries might have otherwise felt.

As this chapter will show, the general perception that Auschwitz offered the most humane solution to the Jewish problem was particularly dangerous, because in all likelihood it extended the life cycle of the efficient and profitable policy of extermination by work. That is, the mutually inclusive combination of advanced formal rationality and what, for the most directly involved perpetrators, was a less stressful killing process translated into an efficient body-consuming machine that, if not for the Soviets, would have probably known no end. The easier and less the stressful killing became, the more victims the leadership in Berlin found in need of extermination. What follows explains how the most efficient and profitable killing process developed during the Holocaust, and why many Nazis perceived it as humane.

Humble Beginnings

As Soviet military strength grew after the winter of 1941, Himmler's plans to fill Auschwitz with Russian POWs naturally faltered.[2] Thus, he turned to a less desirable source of slave labor—Jews. But the first group to arrive at Auschwitz I around this time was incapable of productive labor: 400 mainly elderly people sent from an Upper Silesian labor camp to be killed.[3] In mid-February 1942, these Jews were gassed in Crematorium I.[4] Their death screams could be heard throughout the main camp, and German staff raised concerns that—despite a few attempts to dampen these noises[5]—gassing victims here probably lacked necessary "privacy…"[6] Therefore, as more Jews incapable of work arrived at Auschwitz I, more were transferred to the nearby Birkenau satellite camp. On 27 February 1942, Hans Kammler, the head of the construction division of the SS Main Economic and Administrative Department, decided that it made more sense for the industrial-style crematorium—Crematorium II—which, Bischoff and Prüfer originally planned for Auschwitz I, instead be built at the more secluded Birkenau site.[7] Soon after this decision, on 20 March 1942 (just as Operation Reinhard started), a stone cottage on the new satellite camp was hastily converted into a gas chamber to deal with the ongoing influx of

non-workers to Birkenau.[8] The 60–80 square meter cottage called Bunker I proved capable of killing about 500 victims per gassing.[9] As in the early stages of Operation Reinhard, Jewish work commandos dumped the victims' bodies into large nearby pits. According to Camp Commandant Höss, "Whereas in the spring of 1942 only small operations were involved, the number of convoys increased during the summer…"[10] To keep up with the bureaucratic momentum that supplied increasing numbers of victims and to avoid bottlenecks, Höss felt, "we *had* to create new extermination facilities" [italics added].[11] Of course, he did not *have* to do this; as a problem-solving bureaucratic functionary, he chose to do it. In June 1942, Birkenau's gassing capacity increased when Bunker II, another stone cottage, was converted into a gas chamber. Measuring about 105 square meters, Bunker II was larger than Bunker I and capable of killing about 800 people per gassing.[12] The victims' bodies were also dumped in nearby pits.

On 17 and 18 July 1942, Himmler visited Auschwitz for the second time. During this visit, he personally observed Bunker II in action.[13] The gassing operation he saw included mostly young and old Jews. According to Höss, Himmler "made no remark regarding the process of extermination, but remained quite silent."[14] Himmler's reaction in this case stands in stark contrast to his earlier response to the mass shooting of mostly men in Minsk, which had caused his face to turn "white as cheese…" With the removal of the distasteful visual spectacle, Himmler was no longer disturbed by the massacre of civilians.[15]

During this visit, Himmler informed Höss, who after the war acquired a reputation for being unusually frank,[16] "Eichmann's [train transport] program will continue…and will be accelerated every month from now on."[17] Himmler then instructed Höss to increase Birkenau's population capacity from 100,000 to 200,000.[18] Himmler's intention was to bolster the Nazi war machine by building a regional armaments industry that would draw upon Birkenau's slave labor force.[19] But, because many of those bound for Auschwitz were incapable of productive labor, Himmler also apparently instructed Höss to exterminate those Jews incapable of work.[20] Because Himmler had just seen Bunker II in action, he knew that killing large numbers of non-workers as they arrived in Auschwitz would pose no problem for Höss, who had, as Lasik put it, the requisite "organizational talents."[21] But the SS-Reichsführer did raise concerns about the adjacent pits full of rotting bodies. Again, just in case Germany lost the war, Himmler deemed it wise to eliminate any evidence

of Nazi war crimes. Doing so would also address the local authority's concerns that the 107,000 bodies buried in the pits were polluting the groundwater.[22]

Himmler's solution to the body disposal problem was two-fold. First, as a shorter-term measure, in September 1942 Paul Blobel's Kommando 1005 was sent to Auschwitz to apply the best outdoor body-burning techniques they had discovered that summer.[23] Second, and as a longer-term solution, Höss would expedite Topf & Sons' construction of Birkenau's industrial crematorium (Crematorium II). Himmler's concern re-emphasized the central problem also encountered in the Operation Reinhard camps: Killing was generally easier than body disposal.[24] But he clearly sensed that Birkenau held the potential to overcome such problems, which perhaps explains why during his visit he requested that Birkenau be doubled in size and Höss promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.[25]

The SS-Reichsführer's demand to expand Birkenau's capacity to 200,000 must have sent camp official Karl Bischoff into a spin. The increased death rate that would come with doubling the camp's size would mean even more bodies in need of cremation. To eliminate any risk of bottlenecks, on 19 August Bischoff ordered another Topf & Sons' industrial crematorium.[26] This crematorium—Crematorium III—located opposite Crematorium II was to be a mirror image of its predecessor. See, for example, the following Allied forces aerial photograph taken in 1944 of both crematoria: https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/photo/aerial-photograph-showing-gas-chambers-and-crematoria-at-the-auschwitz-birkenau.

Out of a fear that these new facilities might still fail to handle the anticipated number of bodies, plans were made to build several other smaller facilities: Crematoriums IV, V, and VI (never built). Although the plans for Crematoriums IV and V included their own gas chambers, they were to be constructed next to Bunkers II and I (respectively) so that, if needed, the newer facilities could be co-opted to cremate the victims from these older gassing facilities.[27]

With all this construction likely to take some time, the bodies of victims gassed in the meantime were burned using Blobel's open-fire techniques in massive pits adjacent to Bunkers I and II. This short-term solution, however, generated a problem of its own, exposing the camp and local community to the pungent smell of burning flesh.[28] The elevated smokestacks of the industrial crematoria would somewhat eliminate this problem, which provided another incentive to expedite their construction.

A few months later, in September 1942, Himmler's order to double the capacity of Birkenau to 200,000 prisoners was scaled back to 140,000 when Armaments Minister Albert Speer convinced Hitler of Himmler's probable incompetence in the area of arms production.[29] Despite this setback to Himmler's ambitions, the construction plans for Crematoria II to V remained unchanged and preceded with haste.

With the onset of the 1942–1943 winter, the operators of Bunkers I and II encountered an unanticipated problem. The cold weather made it difficult to raise the room temperature in the gas chambers above the requisite 25.7 degrees Celsius that enabled the vaporization of Zyklon-B pellets. To avoid this problem in the future, the plans for Crematorium II were changed: Its more insulated basement-level morgues were converted into massive underground gas chambers. Doing so simply required replacing the morgues' body chutes with a staircase, which victims would descend. The final plan had the larger of Crematorium II's two morgues serving as an undressing room and the smaller as a massive, partially underground gas chamber.[30] This decision was made easier by the fact that the morgue (now gas chamber) already came with a powerful odor-expelling ventilation system. It will be recalled that the earlier conversion of Crematorium I's morgue into a gas chamber (around late 1941) had highlighted this technology's usefulness for expelling poisonous gas.[31] A minor setback of the new plan was that architect Walter Dejaco's blueprints, produced on 19 December, arrived too late and the concrete for the chutes had already been laid and therefore required demolition.[32] By 29 January, Bischoff and his team stopped referring to the smaller of Crematorium II[33] and started terming it a "gassing cellar [Vergaungskeller]."[34] Because the gas chamber was so big and any gas within it could be extracted so quickly (and replaced with fresh air), the application of this ad hoc decision to both Crematoriums II and III increased Auschwitz-Birkenau's killing/ body disposal capacity enormously.

In early March of 1943, Crematorium II was ready to undergo a series of tests, the biggest of which occurred around the middle of the month when 1492 women, children, and elderly Jews were gassed and then cremated. Incineration of these bodies took more than a day, thus highlighting the inaccuracy of Prüfer's initial calculation: It had failed to incinerate 1440 bodies in 24 hours. After some minor adjustments, the facility's maximum incineration capacity reached 750 bodies in 24 hours, and on 31 March, Crematorium II was ready for use. Death and incineration in Crematorium II basically involved a six-step process. Step One: Victims lined up outside the extermination center

then descended the stairs into the morgue converted into an undressing chamber. Step Two: victims undressed. Step Three: The naked victims entered another slightly smaller chamber—the second partially underground morgue recently converted into a gas chamber—termed the "showers." Step Four: German "disinfectors" would climb on top of the gas chamber and pour Zyklon-B crystals through sealable ceiling vents[35] with the victims then dying below. Step Five: When the victims had died, the gas fumes would be extracted and the Jewish work commando, on entering the chamber, would strip the bodies of all valuables. Step Six: the Jewish work commando would transfer the bodies to the adjacent crematoria (one level above) to be incinerated. The following video clip provides a basic overview of this process: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q75pOXBr4e0. For a virtual reality walk-through of Crematorium II, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3EeTFtYr5E.

A week before Crematorium II's test-run, on 22 March 1943, Crematorium IV was completed. However, by May this facility had been permanently decommissioned because of a major structural defect that only worsened with time.[36] The completion of Crematorium II was followed by Crematorium V and then III on 4 April and 24 June 1943, respectively.[37] Thus, as Operation Reinhard wound down, Auschwitz-Birkenau's role in the Final Solution ramped up.

By the first half of 1943, however, as all this construction came to an end, the tide of the war turned rather decisively in the Soviet's favor. In February 1943, the Wehrmacht was defeated in the Battle of Stalingrad. Then in August, it was defeated again in the Battle of Kursk, its final offensive attack on Soviet territory. The Nazi war machine never recovered from these blows, and thereafter, all Germans knew that the Russians were coming. However, earlier, during the "euphoria of victory," Germany had been persuaded into willingly or indifferently supporting their government's pursuit of a variety of horrific war crimes. And many of these crimes involved Soviet victims, a nation that in light of its enormous loses could in victory hardly be expected to act with benevolence. Having allowed the undertaking of such dark deeds, Germany probably wouldn't be able to act with impunity after all. Suddenly, the folly, selfishness, and greed of it all became apparent. Germany collectively started to contemplate its fate. Many Germans no doubt considered assassinating Hitler and then blaming it all on the machinations of a hypnotic madman. Indeed, during 1943, there was a

rapid increase in assassination attempts on Hitler. In desperation, perhaps Germany could negotiate a permanent truce. But it was too late for all that. As Hitler reminded his inner circle: "Gentlemen, the bridges behind us are broken."[38] Germany as a nation had arguably long passed the Obedience study's persuasion phase (the first part of the experiment where participants were convinced into inflicting the intensifying shocks) and, having supported wrongdoing, by 1943 was deep inside the experiment's after-capitulation phase (the point after participants commit themselves to completing).[39] "[T]hat is good", Goebbels noted in his diary on March of the same year, because "a *Volk* that have burned their bridges fight much more unconditionally than those who still have the chance of retreat."[40] All that Germany could do was fight on to the bitter end, thereby delaying the inevitable.

But fight is not all that they did. A document from the German Postal Censor's Office in Ukraine, which surveilled all private correspondence, warned that the Nazi perk for Germans stationed in the east to purchase then post-cheap local goods back home had spiraled out of control. This undated report, probably written soon after the defeat at Stalingrad, elaborates on "the only thing about Ukraine that interests the majority of the authors"—black marketeering[41]:

> The illegal trade is not just aimed at acquiring personal family necessities. It is becoming a "*business*," carried out on a commercial basis. People are investing and earning money. The letters promise that money grows on trees in Ukraine and that people can get rich there quickly. "Here, you can become a rich woman overnight." Ordinary people are in a position to write home that they have already "earned" thousands. Others want to convert profits made in Ukraine into cars and property in the Reich. In nouveau rich fashion, jewels and expensive furs are purchased for housewives. […] All of this supports the harsh conclusion that is often drawn in the letters: Ukraine is a black market paradise.

The report ends in a statement that supports Heinrich Böll's earlier observation that Germans' stockpiling of goods in the occupied territories reminded him of robbing a corpse: "People often refer to Germans working in business and civilian administration in Ukraine as 'East hyenas.'"[42] Instead of black market trading, other Germans preferred the more direct "shopping with a pistol…"[43] For example, in Lithuania, the company commander of Police Battalion 105 spent "a day and night"

packing "crates of loot" to send back home to Bremen.[44] Many saw stealing as a well-deserved perk in exchange for having undertaking their emotionally taxing genocidal tasks.[45] And anyway, so these men no doubt told themselves, if they didn't keep the stolen goods, someone probably "less deserving" than themselves would. Such rampant corruption was common in the East because the risk of the Nazi authorities prosecuting them was slim—an inherently criminal regime was not in the strongest position to accuse others of criminality. Consequently, many ordinary Germans sensed they could engage in such personally beneficial acts with total impunity.[46]

This kind of corruption spread to much of the civilian population back home in Germany. As Jews from all over Western and Central Europe were increasingly rounded up and sent to places like Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Nazis confiscated millions of cubic meters of their household effects and then redistributed them to German bombing raid victims, young newlyweds, large families, and war widows. Occasionally, the recipients were distinguished members of the SS and military.[47] In the heavily bombed working-class districts of Hamburg, for example, librarian Gertrud Seydelmann recollected:

> Ordinary housewives suddenly wore fur coats, traded coffee, and jewelry, and had imported antique furniture and rugs from Holland and France. … Some of our regular readers were always telling me to go down to the harbor if I wanted to get hold of rugs, carpets, furniture, jewelry, and furs. It was property stolen from Dutch Jews who, as I learned after the war, had been taken away to the death camps. I wanted nothing to do with this. But in refusing, I had to be careful around those greedy people, especially the women, who were busily enriching themselves. I couldn't let my true feelings show.[48]

These housewives never killed any Jews, and as aerial bombardment of German housing increased in the last few years of the war, their emotional universes were all consumed by *their* victimization. And anyway, so these housewives likely told themselves, if they refused to capitalize on this influx of property, (again) some other less deserving German than themselves no doubt would. After such rationalizations sufficiently disarmed their guilty conscience, a competition of who among them could successfully acquire the most prized possessions of a murdered people ensued.

Back at Auschwitz-Birkenau, from mid-1943, the camp's multiple gas chambers and crematoria facilities, managed by the organizational talents of Eichmann and Höss, were capable of efficiently killing and hygienically disposing of more human beings than any of the Operation Reinhard camps. All that was needed was an opportunity to prove it. That opportunity came on 19 March 1944 when the German armed forces invaded Hungary, which the Nazis (correctly) suspected was about to desert the Axis alliance in favor of the allies.[49] Germany's successful invasion of Hungary occurred as elsewhere the Nazis were losing enormous tracts of land. Germany might lose the war, but there was still an opportunity for Hitler to win his personal battle with the European Jews.[50] With hegemony over Hungary and the loaded gun of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Nazi leadership decided to exterminate the Hungarian Jews.

Although several months before the Hungarian invasion Höss had left Auschwitz for a higher administrative position in Berlin,[51] he returned to his old job to do what he did best. As Hilberg puts it, "Hungary was going to lift Auschwitz to the top."[52] To have any chance of achieving "Aktion Höss,"[53] the energetic commandant needed to act with celerity and unprecedented levels of efficiency. He had a three-track railway siding laid inside the Birkenau complex—an innovation that enabled three trains to enter the camp perimeter at any one time.[54] From mid-May 1944, Höss expected from Eichmann an average delivery of about 12–14,000 Hungarian Jews a day.[55] Because most of the arrivals were young and old, only about 10–30% were selected as workers.[56] The rest were sent on-foot to Crematoria II, III, and V, while smaller groups were gassed in Bunker II, which had been re-commissioned for the special action.[57]

However, it soon became apparent that Auschwitz-Birkenau's maximum incineration capacity could not keep up with such a massive and continuous influx of victims. The inventive Höss therefore devised a combination of old and new techniques. These included the construction of several massive outdoor incineration pits, the biggest of which measured around 45 m long by 8 m wide and 2 m deep.[58] There about 5000 bodies a day could be incinerated.[59] Another technique Höss deployed included over-filling the industrial crematoria and then having a Jewish work detail use hammers to crush the partially incinerated bodies into ash. This solution came with the attendant risk of damaging the crematoria. Nonetheless, both strategies greatly increased Birkenau's

maximum incineration capacity to around 8000[60] or even 10,000 bodies per day.[61] Therefore, after the selections of workers from non-workers, Auschwitz-Birkenau could keep up with the daily influx of around 12–14,000 Jews.

Reflecting on Höss' "assembly-line operation,"[62] camp worker SS-Unterscharführer Pery Broad recalled, "There was never a break. Hardly had the last corpse been dragged out of the chamber to the cremation ditch in the corpse-covered yard behind the crematorium, than the next batch was already undressing."[63] This blitzkrieg against the Hungarian Jews—which took place across a seven-week period between 15 May and 9 July 1944—ended in the deportation of nearly 440,000 people to Auschwitz-Birkenau, most of whom were gassed on arrival.[64] According to van Pelt and Dwork, "At no other time was Auschwitz more efficient as a killing center."[65] Indeed, Höss, with the constant flow of Eichmann's trains, had taken Auschwitz-Birkenau to the top. But because the camp reached its full body-consuming stride so late into the war, it ended up killing "only" between 1,100,000 and 1,500,000 civilians.[66] Although Auschwitz never got to demonstrate its long-term destructive potential, it still became what Hilberg termed "the largest death center the world had ever seen."[67] In light of the rapid decimation of the Hungarian Jews, one can only imagine the number of people the Nazi regime would have killed had Auschwitz-Birkenau remained open for just a few more years. Hayes actually estimates that had the war continued and the Nazis were able to round up and transport the remaining European Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau, all could have been killed and their bodies cremated by the end of 1946.[68]

Auschwitz-Birkenau: Formal Rationality and the Most Efficient Means to the End

In terms of the four main components of formal rationality—efficiency, predictability, control, and calculability—Auschwitz-Birkenau took resolving the Jewish question to a new and even higher level. Trains from all over Europe packed with several thousand Jews each entered a heavily guarded, electrified, and basically inescapable camp perimeter. With the selection of non-workers from workers complete, efficiency required the key ingredient of victim docility, as had been the case during Operation Reinhard. Once again, the T4's usual tricks appeared. "Very politely, very amiably, a little speech was made to [those selected for immediate

death]," noted French physician André Lettich. A German would tell them, "You've arrived after a trip; you're dirty; you're going to have a bath. Undress quickly!" To further bolster the pretext, on some occasions Lettich claims, "towels and soap were distributed."[69] If the process moved too slowly, German camp workers might capitalize on the fact that the victims were likely thirsty after having endured a three- to four-day train journey. They might promise a drink of water or coffee, but only after the new arrivals had taken a delousing shower. This offer, which the Jews frequently applauded, helped ensure a calm, smooth, and continuous flow of bodies through the system.[70]

By offering the strongest prisoners a chance for survival in exchange for their labor, the camp guards also managed to diffuse the most threatening source of Jewish resistance. Those selected as workers had an identification number tattooed on the inside of their wrist to track their movements within and beyond the camp, and their gradual demise from living to dead. The promise of false hope helped to motivate the slowly starving Jews to work hard: Auschwitz I's camp gate (mis)informed all that "Arbeit Macht Frei"—"Work will set you free." Prisoners not only worked hard for free but also did so in return for barely any food. When their productivity dropped below a certain level or they were deemed surplus to requirements, like their unproductive relatives before them, they too were sent to the gas chambers. Even if these workers eventually realized their fate, there was no time left to organize a revolt and they were often too weak to resist anyway. After these workers had been killed, they were replaced by healthier new arrivals. Trapped within the highly secure and largely inescapable enclosure, these new slaves typically shared the same fate as those before them.[71]

Alice Lok Cahana's account of the gassing process at Auschwitz-Birkenau (which was essentially the same for both non-workers and worn-out workers) illustrates more of the Nazis' tricks of deception. On 7 October 1944, Cahana and her sister were selected to go to a new barrack but on the way they were instructed to first take a shower for hygiene purposes. They were sent to "a nice building with flowers at the windows."

> I see flowers in a window—reminding you of home. Reminding you that mother went out when the Germans came into Hungary, and instead of being scared or crying or hysterical she went to the market and bought violets. And it made me so calm. If Mother buys flowers it can't be so bad. They will not hurt us.[72]

With the flowers having set Cahana's worst fears at ease, she willingly entered the changing room where "an SS woman said, 'Everyone put their shoes nicely together, your clothes on the floor.'"[73] But were they really about to take a shower? More props suggested so. "The 'changing rooms', the anterooms to the gas chambers [were]…overt stage sets, with their numbered pegs for clothing ('Remember your number!') and the signs in various languages advertising the benefits of hygiene."[74] Next, Cahana notes, "we were taken into a room—naked."[75] After entering, a solid door quickly closed behind them. Before they could establish what was happening, the door suddenly swung open and they were quickly ushered out of the so-called showers. Cahana and those with her had, by the narrowest of margins, avoided certain death because the Jewish work detail had staged a revolt.

Had there not been a revolt, a van with the markings of the Red Cross would have pulled up outside. The van's markings were, according to Auschwitz bookkeeper Oskar Gröning, designed to "create the impression" to all those who could see from near and far that, in line with the pretense, this facility was indeed a delousing station—"people had nothing to fear."[76] A couple of Germans would exit the van and, donning gas masks, climb on top of the semi-underground gas chamber. The two "disinfecting operators," as they were euphemistically termed, would then await a signal from a higher authority figure (sometimes a medical doctor) to pour carefully measured quantities of Zyklon-B crystals into the roof vents.[77] Then, the two operators would close and seal the lids behind them,[78] return to their van, and drive off. And because they drove off, they remained perceptually oblivious to the pandemonium and terror left in their wake.[79] It took about 10–12 minutes to kill all the victims,[80] upon which the industrial-strength air vents would expediently remove the gas from the chamber. Next, the Jewish Sonderkommando entered the chamber and stripped the two, perhaps two and a half, thousand or so, victims[81] of anything valuable—hair, hidden items, gold teeth. The stripping process took about four hours.[82] The bodies were then dragged into the adjacent lift and transferred to one of the crematoria where they were incinerated. The German overseers or even their Eastern European collaborators need not engage in any of this horrific labor. In an action, reminiscent of Milgram's processing blocks (one hour per participant), Clendinnen notes about Auschwitz-Birkenau's highly rationalized system, "When the episode was over and the rooms emptied, there would be a frantic rush to remove all traces of

the last audience and to reset the scene for the next intake and the next performance."[83] A single performance at Auschwitz—the start-to-finish conversion of a single convoy into ash—took on average 72 hours.[84]

Because many workers required close supervision over fairly long periods of time, Auschwitz's system of "extermination through work" was dependent on far more (relatively expensive) German guards than the Operation Reinhard camps—2500 on average.[85] Having said this, like Operation Reinhard but so different from the mass shootings, few Germans were required to run Auschwitz's extermination facilities. With a large Jewish slave labor workforce and Jewish kapo enforcers, as Rees says of Auschwitz's Crematoria II and III,

> The whole horrific operation was often supervised by as few as two SS men. Even when the killing process was stretched to the limit there were only ever a handful of SS members around. This, of course, limited to a minimum the number of Germans who might be subjected to the kind of psychological damage that members of the killing squads in the East had suffered.[86]

Auschwitz-Birkenau, like Operation Reinhard, could kill a set maximum number of victims per day, thus enabling the calculation of monthly or even yearly genocidal mortality rates. As a result, predicting how long it would take to "disappear" Europe's entire population of Jews became technically possible. Indeed, in terms of calculability and predictability, Auschwitz exceeded Operation Reinhard for two main reasons. First, Auschwitz's indoor crematoria ensured that unpredictable rainy weather did not reduce the camp's normal body-burning capacity. Second, the diesel motors used in Operation Reinhard frequently broke down,[87] regularly causing major bottlenecks in the system. At Auschwitz, Zyklon-B posed no such risk because packing humans into a hermetically sealed and insulated chamber reliably and predictably saw the room temperature rise over the requisite 25.7 degrees Celsius.

Auschwitz had another advantage. Although all prisoners who entered were, as in Operation Reinhard and the mass shootings, robbed of all their valuables, over the long term the system of "extermination through work" was a potentially more profitable form of extortion. To feed, clothe, and lodge a worker in Auschwitz cost 1.34 Reichsmarks per day, but to hire the least skilled laborers, the Nazis charged employers 3–4 Reichsmarks.[88] Between 1940 and 1945, the Nazi state earned 60

million Reichsmarks from Auschwitz's slave labor system.[89] The longer the Auschwitz stayed open, the more profit the Nazis could accrue. Operation Reinhard and the mass shootings, however, could—for obvious reasons—only generate high profits over the short term. Quite simply the system at Auschwitz became the Nazi regime's model solution to its European-wide Jewish question because of its efficiency and longer-term profitability.

In 2001, I visited Auschwitz during a backpacking tour across Eastern Europe. Afterward, I, like most visitors, was left wondering what kind of cold, calculated, and cunning person could envisage, design, and then build such a monstrous factory of death. But the answer that has emerged from my subsequent research sees this singular monstrous person disappear into the collective mass. Instead, I found numerous perpetrators who independently and together suggested and tested a wide variety of potential "improvements." The ideas that proved most effective—for example, to utilize Eastern European collaborators and Jewish labor for the most difficult positions, to install air ventilation systems in a morgue, to use faster-acting Zyklon-B gas, to construct a contiguous gas chamber and crematorium, to convert Crematorium II's basement-level morgues into an undressing room and gas chamber, and finally to increase the scale of everything—were retained. And all the ideas that, with time, proved ineffective were dropped. Eventually, the most effective means accumulated until an ugly beast emerged—one increasingly capable of converting the preconceived goal discussed at Wannsee into a reality.

Auschwitz-Birkenau stood at the end of a long journey of ad hoc experimentation that chipped away at the numerous and varied problems associated with exterminating millions of unwanted civilians. The invention of Auschwitz cannot be attributed to any one person. The resulting responsibility ambiguity at every link in the organizational chain only made it psychologically easier for all involved to play a part in the perpetrator collective that, "only in small ways," contributed to the camp's invention. And it was Auschwitz's disjointed invention that probably explains why, after the war, perpetrators could not pinpoint who exactly invented the ghoulish yet undeniably clever process of extermination. For the perpetrators—but also for victims, survivors, and postwar observers—the end result that was Auschwitz-Birkenau became an incomprehensible enigma beyond rational explanation.

But, it is here that a centrally important Milgram-Holocaust linkage is found. Consider, for example, Milgram's discovery that substituting a translucent screen separating the participant from learner with a solid partition could greatly increase the completion rate—an idea actually stimulated from the bottom-up by his participants' avoidance behavior. Milgram did not know why exactly this small innovation increased the completion rate, he just knew it did. And when discoveries like this moved him closer to his preconceived goal, he retained them. Over time, these kinds of innovations accumulated until a "devilishly ingenious"[90] procedure emerged and he achieved his goal—maximization of the baseline completion rate. And afterward, Milgram, the main but not only inventive force behind the Obedience experiments, could not explain the disturbing results he had obtained.

Conclusion

Auschwitz was the terminus of the "twisted road" to the Holocaust. It represents the Nazis' most preferred solution to their self-defined "Jewish problem." As in Operation Reinhard, staff at Auschwitz collectively found ways to extend a little more all four components of a formally rational organizational system—greater efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control. Just some of the key ideas that advanced formal rationality included the use of tracking tattoos, industrial-sized, weatherproof, indoor crematoria, a gas dependent on body heat, new tricks of deception, and railway tracks of sufficient capacity. Auschwitz's innovations saw the killing and cremation of humans on a greater scale and in a shorter amount of time than any earlier system they had developed. On top of all this, the program of extermination through work was less wasteful (of slave labor), and therefore, the system overall was far more profitable than Operation Reinhard. As Bauman argues:

> Considered as a complex purposeful operation, the Holocaust may serve as a paradigm of modern bureaucratic rationality. Almost everything was done to achieve maximum results with minimum costs and efforts. Almost everything (within the realm of the possible) was done to deploy the skills and resources of everybody involved, including those who were to become the victims of the successful operation. Almost all pressures irrelevant or adversary to the purpose of the operation were neutralized or put out of action altogether. Indeed, the story of the organization of the Holocaust could be made into a textbook of scientific management.[91]

Without a doubt, there were many examples of great inefficiency during the Holocaust—for one, the Nazi management system with its overlapping jurisdictions stimulated the duplication of tasks as different factions independently vied to resolve whatever it was they thought the Führer wished. Having said this, it was still a management system that went on to produce more efficient winners and less efficient losers. Once the process took its course, the leadership was able to pick and choose from a range of options the best available solution to any one problem. And from this perspective, Höss' Auschwitz was *the* winner among a wide range of competitors. In terms of developing the most rational solution to a seemingly intractable problem—in conjunction with business acumen and entrepreneurial capitalism where the pursuit of profit was taken to its unregulated natural extreme—nothing competes with Auschwitz.

However, as the next chapter will show, the clear presence in Auschwitz of an ever-advancing form of Weberian formal rationality provides an incomplete picture. The extermination machine had to be as efficient and profitable as possible, but it also had to ensure that those Germans most directly involved could avoid experiencing any "burdening of the soul"—any feelings of shame, guilt, or (most commonly) repugnance that killing civilians could stimulate. The Germans most directly involved had to be able to avoid the conclusion that they had become mass executioners of defenseless men, women, children, and babies. The killing process at Auschwitz extended previous boundaries of formal rationality and did so in a way that German perpetrators in and beyond the camps were able to call "humane."

Notes

1. See Mommsen (1986, p. 126).
2. Longerich (2012, p. 557).
3. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 301).
4. Lasik (1998, p. 293).
5. An attempt was made to surround three of the gas chamber's external walls with steep embankments of dirt and another to drown out the victims' cries by revving a truck's engine (Cesarani 2016, pp. 530–532).
6. Quoted in Pressac and van Pelt (1998, p. 209). See also Friedländer (2007, p. 359).
7. Pressac and van Pelt (1998, p. 210).
8. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 302).
9. Pressac and van Pelt (1998, p. 212).

10. Quoted in Wellers (1993, p. 149).
11. Quoted in Wellers (1993, p. 149).
12. Pressac and van Pelt (1998, p. 213).
13. Piper (1998a, p. 163).
14. Höss (2001, p. 208).
15. In conflict with this account, Longerich (2012, p. 534) argues that Himmler may have emotionally acclimatized to watching mass shootings from close range.
16. In reference to Höss after the war, Lasik has noted, "in contrast to many other Nazi defendants, his behavior during the proceedings against him revealed a man capable of assuming responsibility for his deeds without begging for his life or trying to save it by lying or shifting the blame to others" (1998, p. 297).
17. Höss quoted in van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 320).
18. Pressac and van Pelt (1998, p. 215).
19. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 321).
20. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 320).
21. Lasik (1998, p. 292).
22. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, pp. 319–320).
23. Piper (1998a, p. 163) and Wellers (1993, pp. 168–169). According to Höss, soon after Himmler's visit, Blobel arrived with instructions from Eichmann's office that he (Blobel) was to open the pits and burn all the bodies previously buried. The ashes were to be broken down and dispersed so that it was impossible to determine the approximate number of victims. Blobel had learned such techniques, according to Höss, in Chełmno and was instructed to pass his knowledge on to Höss. Höss then visited Chełmno to learn what Blobel had discovered (Höss 2001, p. 188).
24. Adam (1989, p. 150) and Lasik (1998, p. 293).
25. Höss (2001, p. 212) and Lasik (1998, p. 294). According to Pressac and van Pelt (1998, p. 213), Auschwitz was attractive for two main reasons. First, the camp was adjacent to an excellent rail connection. Second, Auschwitz would soon be capable of incinerating large numbers of corpses per day.
26. Pressac and van Pelt (1998, p. 216).
27. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 321).
28. Höss (2001, p. 190).
29. Speer (1981, p. 23, as cited in van Pelt and Dwork 1996, p. 324).
30. "The SS also planned to use the two remaining morgues as gas chambers, wrongly imagining that the high yield anticipated for the five triple-muffle furnaces would allow a staggered operation. In this configuration, an outside undressing room was indispensable. It was to open directly onto the service stairway connecting the two halls by way of the central

vestibule. Moreover, it proved necessary to improve the ventilation of Leichenkeller 2 (which was only deaerated) by adding an aeration system to bring air into the room. After the furnaces had been tested and their output better estimated, it became clear that they could not handle the "yield" of two gas chambers. Consequently, Leichenkeller 2 became an undressing room" (Pressac and van Pelt 1998, p. 224).

31. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 324).
32. Pressac and van Pelt (1998, pp. 223–224).
33. Quoted in Pressac and van Pelt (1998, p. 200).
34. Quoted in Wellers (1993, pp. 157–158).
35. The Illustrated London News (14 October 1944, p. 442, as cited in Struk 2004, p. 144) provides a photo of one of these vents. This photo, however, is of Majdanek concentration camp's gas chamber, which used the same gassing technique as Auschwitz though on a much smaller scale.
36. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 331).
37. Pressac and van Pelt (1998, pp. 234, 236).
38. Quoted in Sereny (2000, p. 281).
39. Erdos (2013).
40. Fröhlich (1993, p. 454, as cited in Kühne 2010, p. 94).
41. Quoted Aly (2006, p. 113).
42. Quoted Aly (2006, pp. 115–116).
43. Quoted in Mallmann (2002, p. 122, as cited in Kühl 2016, p. 95).
44. Quoted in Schneider (2011, p. 212, as cited in Kühl 2016, p. 95).
45. Kühl (2016, pp. 100–101).
46. Kühl (2016, pp. 97–99).
47. Aly (2006, pp. 117–131).
48. Quoted in Aly (2006, p. 130).
49. Braham (1998, p. 458).
50. Stone (2010, p. 78). See also Mommsen (1986, p. 114).
51. Wellers (1993, p. 140).
52. Hilberg (1998, p. 88).
53. Lasik (1998, p. 295).
54. Hilberg (1998, p. 88) and Wellers (1993, p. 170).
55. Braham (1998, p. 462).
56. Braham (1998, p. 466) and Wellers (1993, p. 171) state the percentage of workers selected was about 10%. van Pelt and Dwork, however, put the figure within a range of 10–30% (1996, p. 342).
57. Pressac and van Pelt (1998, p. 238).
58. Braham (1998, p. 463).
59. Piper (1998a, p. 173).
60. Piper (1998a, p. 166).
61. Klee et al. (1988, p. 273) and Fleming (1984, p. 145).

62. Braham (1998, p. 462).
63. Quoted in Wellers (1993, p. 163).
64. Braham (2011, p. 45).
65. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 342).
66. Piper (1998b, pp. 71–72). This point is clearly supported by Auschwitz's rather conservative annual death rates. From May 1940 to January 1942 (a twenty month period), approximately 20,500 inmates died (Adam 1989, p. 149). However, after 1941 the rate of death rapidly increased. In 1942, approximately 200,000 Jews were killed in Auschwitz. In 1943, the number rose to about 250,000. And, in 1944, it more than doubled to approximately 600,000 victims (van Pelt and Dwork 1996, pp. 336, 343).
67. Hilberg (1961, p. 564).
68. Hayes (2017, p. 129).
69. Quoted in Wellers (1993, p. 150). See also Piper (1998a, p. 170).
70. See Braham (1998, pp. 463–464), Lanzmann (1995, p. 113), Piper (1998a, p. 173) and Wellers (1993, pp. 164, 167).
71. Rubenstein (1978, p. 61).
72. Quoted in Rees (2005, pp. 255–256).
73. Quoted Rees (2005, p. 254).
74. Clendinnen (1999, p. 147). Despite their inventive efforts to install the crucial ingredient of docility into the extermination process, both Höss and Stangl later claimed to have been perplexed as to why the victims went to their deaths so easily (Wistrich 2001, pp. 227, 229), effectively blaming the victims for their own demise, much like those in the shooting squads had done.
75. Quoted in Rees (2005, p. 254).
76. Quoted in Rees (2005, p. 127).
77. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 350).
78. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, p. 350).
79. van Pelt and Dwork (1996, pp. 350–351).
80. Venezia (2009, pp. 59, 69).
81. Piper (1998a, p. 170) and Adam (1989, p. 150).
82. See Piper (1998a, p. 171).
83. Clendinnen (1999, p. 147).
84. Venezia (2009, p. 81).
85. Hayes (2017, p. 134).
86. Rees (2005, p. 230). See also Venezia (2009, pp. 83–84).
87. Adam (1989, p. 147).
88. Piper (1998c, p. 45).
89. Piper (1998c, p. 46).
90. Marcus (1974, p. 2).
91. Bauman (1989, pp. 149–150).

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CHAPTER 8

The Nazi's Pursuit for a "Humane" Method of Killing

When Nazis from a wide variety of ranks, whether lowly Rolf-Heinz Höppner in Lódź or Auschwitz Commandant Rudolf Höss, Wilhelm Kube, Karl Brandt, or even those of the heights of Heinrich Himmler spoke of a "humane" method of killing other human beings, what exactly did they mean? One outcome of this book is a tentative outline of the key characteristics—a Weberian Ideal-Type—of what the Nazis regarded as the most humane method of killing. As this chapter will argue, when these and other Nazis spoke of such matters, what they seemed to desire was a method of killing that rated highly on four main conditions. First, victims should remain totally unaware that they are about to die. Second, perpetrators need not touch, see, or hear their victims as they die. Third, the death blow should avoid leaving any visual indications of harm on the victims' bodies. And finally, the death blow should be instantaneous. At the start of the Holocaust, the Nazis did not have a cheap and efficient method of killing civilians that came remotely close to meeting all four of these conditions. Over time, however, and with much competitive trial-and-error experimentation, certain innovators in places like Auschwitz inched their way ever closer to this ideal.

No Anticipation of Death

Most Nazis strongly preferred that their many civilian victims not experience the stress of knowing they were about to die. To secure such a condition, the Nazis relied most often on elaborate props of deception.

These included, for example, promises of water, food, and work after taking a quick shower, fake railway stations, pleasantly painted gas chambers with flowers and a carefully placed Star of David—all to trick victims into thinking they had not arrived at a place of death. So why was it so important to the perpetrators that the victims not anticipate their own deaths? One explanation is that such props encouraged victim docility, which helped to secure a smooth and efficient flow of victims through the killing process. There is certainly much truth to this explanation; however, a closer look reveals other, more subtle but equally important motives.

A strong indicator that the "overt stage sets" were not only about securing an efficient killing process comes from an example near the end of the war. At the Stutthof camp between August and November 1944, camp commandant Paul Werner Hoppe instructed his subordinates to kill all Jews who were old, sick, and unable to work.[1] To deal with similar requests in the past, a railway car was converted into a hermetically sealed Zyklon-B gas chamber. In this case, a group of Jewish women were told they were to go to a stocking and darning shop—easy indoor work—and had to be transported there by train:

> One of the SS men put on a railroad employee's uniform and whistled, as is usually done in marshaling yards. To make the subterfuge complete, an ordinary car was placed next to the gassing car […] The SS staff of the camp urged the twenty or thirty victims to hurry: it was time to leave; they had to go clear to Danzig. As soon as everybody was in the car, the doors were closed. Then the gas was thrown through the opening in the roof.[2]

Why did this SS man go to such inefficient lengths—putting on a special uniform, blowing a whistle, arranging another carriage, and putting on such a big show? Did he simply wish to avoid the display of force and physical intimidation that would have more efficiently resulted in the women doing as they were told? In fact, he seems to have tried to tempt the women into willingly, perhaps even cheerfully, entering the gas chamber of their own accord. It seems that such elaborate and inefficient deception likely grew out of a concern for the reaction victims might have had to knowledge of their impending deaths. If they were oblivious to their fate, then the victims could be expected to avoid the reactions of terror likely to accompany such knowledge. Thus, for the victims, the elaborate deception would make for a less stressful and therefore more

"humane" dying experience. This is no doubt part of the explanation, as the following admission by SS-Mann Heinrich Hesse makes clear:

> One of the Jewish people killed by me was a Jewish woman aged between twenty and thirty, I cannot remember exactly. She was a beautiful woman. I was glad to be able to shoot her so that she did not fall into the hands of the Untersturmführer. But please don't take that to mean that I enjoyed it. I said to the Jewess when I brought her from the cellar that the Untersturmführer wanted to speak to her, or something to that effect. My only thought was that if I had to do something I should cause the person as little pain as possible. I did not want the Jewess to suffer fear of death. I then made her come out of the cellar. She went in front of me. On the way to the grave or graves, which had already been dug, I suddenly shot her from behind.[3]

Here, again the perpetrator's sole concern seems to have been the stress generated by the victim's "fear of death." The same concern led to a refinement to the Zyklon-B killing method. The SS preferred using Zyklon-B that had its distinctive nutty smell removed, which the manufacturers added to provide humans with an early warning of the gas's lethal presence.[4] Even after deceiving their victims into entering the "shower," the SS preferred they remain incapable of identifying the mysterious "delousing" gas. This deception, however, fooled nobody—the victims could immediately feel that the gas was nocuous. Therefore, it appears that the purpose behind removing the smell was a Milgram-like "balm to the…conscience"[5] whereby although the victims still ended up dying, the perpetrators could tell themselves that they never saw death coming. That is, the removal of the nutty smell was a strain resolving technique of self-deception where the perpetrators made a slight change to the killing method that really did little more than making them feel a lot better about their extermination of other human beings.

Another closely related explanation for the preference to deceive victims is that perpetrators hoped to avoid having to deal with their victims' guilt-inducing reactions to suddenly realizing they were about to die. Having to encounter potentially emotional victims just before killing them—the begging, sobbing, crying, screaming, and expressions of absolute horror—would have probably made the perpetrators feel like the ruthless executioners they had become. Keeping victims oblivious to their fate arguably resulted in much less stress for the perpetrators.

When, as survivor Ada Lichtman noted, the props of deception encouraged victims to dance, sing, and applauded on their way to the grave, perpetrators would have found the psychological stress associated with being an executioner much easier to bear. Certainly, these acts of deception made for a relatively less stressful and more tolerable work environment.

The importance of subterfuge for easing perpetrators' guilty consciences is perhaps best illustrated in the powerful emotional sting killers often experienced when their victims saw through the techniques of deception. With just a few words, powerless people were capable of inflicting deep wounds on the guilty consciences of the most efficient Nazi killers. Consider, for example, the recollections of Rudolf Höss, in regards to a "shattering" event that he believed he would "never forget:"

> One woman approached me as she walked past and, pointing to her four children who were manfully helping the smallest ones over the rough ground, whispered: 'How can you bring yourself to kill such beautiful, darling children? Have you no heart at all?' […] I remember, too, a woman who tried to throw her children out of the gas-chamber, just as the door was closing. Weeping she called out: 'At least let my precious children live.' There were many such shattering scenes, which affected all who witnessed them.[6]

For Höss, there were other events:

> On one occasion two small children were so absorbed in some game that they quite refused to let their mother tear them away from it. Even the Jews of the Special Detachment were reluctant to pick the children up. The imploring look in the eyes of the mother, who certainly knew what was happening, is something I shall never forget. The people were already in the gas-chamber and becoming restive, and I had to act. Everyone was looking at me. I nodded to the junior non-commissioned officer on duty and he picked up the screaming, struggling children in his arms and carried them into the gas-chamber, accompanied by their mother who was weeping in the most heart-rending fashion. My pity was so great that I longed to vanish from the scene: yet I might not show the slightest trace of emotion.[7]

In the most sophisticated of killing centers like Auschwitz, elaborate acts of deception could secure victim docility and greatly aided in

maintaining killing efficiency. But it was equally important that such techniques *also* enabled perpetrators to generally avoid the great psychological stress that they were killers of defenseless civilians. For the most directly involved Germans, techniques of victim deception also served as tools of self-deception so that the killing of other human beings felt to them like a humane and gentle experience.

Touching, Seeing, or Hearing

The Nazi regime's pursuit of a method of killing capable of destroying large numbers of civilians gradually moved in a direction that allowed German perpetrators to emotionally distance themselves from their victims. By the time Crematorium II was completed at Auschwitz, the Germans most directly involved in the killing process need not touch, see, or hear their victims die. According to German political prisoner Karl Lil, once victims of Auschwitz were trapped in the hermetically sealed gas chambers, little of their fate could be detected by those outside. "A few seconds later a cry, muffled, stifled by the concrete walls. And then, a few minutes afterward, a brownish-yellow vapor poured out of the chimney."[8] Because the most directly involved Germans could be, if they so chose, physically and emotionally distant from the act of killing, they tended to perceive this method as a more humane and gentle experience (again, for them).

How could the Germans regard a method of killing that barely stimulated their sensory systems as humane? The more perceptually benign the method of killing, the greater the disconnect between cause and effect. And the greater the disconnect between cause and effect, the greater the responsibility ambiguity. And it was this responsibility ambiguity that helped those Germans working in the camps to perceive themselves only indirectly involved. This distinction made no difference to the lethal outcome, but it did wonders for German perpetrators' self-perceptions. When Germans in Auschwitz killed, the separation of cause from effect inherent in the process ensured that the end result did not *feel* gruesome or beastly, like say, killing with their bare hands. For Höss, the Zyklon-B method was, as he put it himself, more "humane."[9] Much like the desk murderers in Berlin, or those that rounded up victims, or drove the trains, partaking in the killing process for Höss and his men was not gruesome because none of them were "directly" involved. The indirectness of the entire operation seductively ensured that their essential

contributions to the wider organizational process resembled the structurally disconnected and perceptually benign contributions of all the other specialist functionary links further up the organizational chain.

As the perceptual distance between cause and effect increased, Germans in the camps became more and more able to avoid encountering the consequences of their lethal contributions. Avoidance was an option for the German camp staff because, much like Milgram's participants, they were in a position of power to control what they were willing to know (or not know). It had become possible for all Germans involved to engage in "intentional ignorance"[10]—all could look away and then continue to contribute and benefit from that contribution. This is why Stangl was able to say, "unless one was actually working in the forest, one could live without actually seeing; most of us [Germans] never saw anybody dying or dead."[11] As Hayes notes, this occurred in the ghettos as well: "the Germans were adept at insulating themselves from the worst aspects of the killing processes […] they often made the Jewish police forces do their dirty work of rounding up people who did not appear for deportation when scheduled to do so."[12] If Germans never saw anything, how could they be directly responsible? Stangl, for one, went to great lengths to make sure he was unlikely to experience anything that might upset him. For example, when asked after the war where the worst place in the extermination camps was for him, his response suggests he put great effort into shielding himself from the realities surrounding him. "'The undressing barracks,' he said at once. 'I avoided it from my innermost being; I couldn't confront them; I couldn't lie to them; I avoided at any price talking to those who were about to die: *I couldn't stand it*'" [italics added].[13] Stangl's self-centered viewpoint which skirted over his victims' actually horrific experiences was not only very common among the German perpetrators,[14] it shares some similarity to Mrs. Rosenblum's sole concern with *her* terrible experience during the Obedience studies. What Stangl failed to consider was that it was his selective avoidance of personal encounters with his approximately one million victims that ensured that he was indeed able to "stand it." Höss conceded, "My inner scruples about remaining in the concentration camp, despite my unsuitability for such work, receded into the background now that I no longer came into such direct contact with the prisoners as I had done in Dachau." As Wistrich said of both Höss and Stangl, "Their sleep was never disturbed since they rarely saw any

suffering faces, concentrating as they did solely on the organizational task at hand."[15] As Primo Levi perceptively put it:

> The best way to defend oneself against the invasion of burdensome memories is to impede their entry, to extend a *cordon sanitaire*. It is easier to deny entry to a memory than to free oneself from it after it has been recorded. This, in substance, was the purpose of many of the artifices thought up by the Nazi commanders in order to protect the consciences of those assigned to do the dirty work and to ensure their services, disagreeable even for the most hardened cutthroats.[16]

It transpires that the Führer often informed those like Himmler tasked with implementing the Holocaust that extermination should be implemented as "humanely" as possible.[17] And what it seems he meant by this was that killing should be "done impersonally." For Hitler, killing "impersonally" was, according to John Toland, synonymous with doing so "without cruelty."[18] This is why during Himmler's second visit to Sobibor in 1943, the camp guards were instructed not to wear their whips and truncheons[19]—the leadership desperately needed to hold on to the belief that (where possible) their goal was a generally cruelty-free and humane enterprise. Cruelty was, however, as Goldhagen so convincingly shows, endemic.[20] But this tactile "hands on"-type cruelty—often physical beatings—was, as Levi implied at the end of Volume 1, usually not lethal (and often—although certainly not always—it had a "rational" organizational purpose).[21] Violence during the roundups and in the concentration camps was, generally speaking, only lethal when Germans had ready access to means of killing that enabled them to (at least) avoid having to touch their victims.[22] And when Germans were more intimately connected to the deaths of their victims, they often—although again certainly not always[23]—had quite different experiences to the more indirect perpetrators like Stangl and Höss. Consider, for example, the postwar admission by one elderly German to his son:

> the brown eyes of a six-year-old girl had never let him rest. He was a Wehrmacht soldier in Warsaw during the ghetto uprising. They were clearing the bunkers, and one morning a six-year-old girl came out of one of these bunkers and ran over to hug him. He could still remember the look in her eyes, both fearful and trusting. Then his commander ordered him to stab her with his bayonet—which he did. He killed her. But the look in her eyes followed him all those years. […] He had never told it to anyone before.[24]

Of course, technocrats concentrating on step-by-step organizational tasks—timetables, transports, supplies, disposal—while others suffer, shares much in common with the Obedience Studies. As one participant in the Remote condition stated, "It's funny how you really begin to forget that there's a guy out there, even though you can hear him. For a long time I just concentrated on pressing the switches and reading the words."[25] Unlike the above Wehrmacht soldier, technocrats were, with varying degrees of success, able to "forget," because the technology is structurally divorced from the moral.

As long as Höss, Stangl, and most other Germans in the more advanced gassing camps received no (or only a few) perceptual cues, it seems they could avoid thinking about the implications of their contributions. For the vast majority of Germans working within Auschwitz, the camp's structural compartmentalization—its many different sectors—greatly aided in separating cause from effect. Auschwitz bookkeeper Oskar Gröning, for example, took great comfort in the fact that he worked in the much larger "living" section of the camp; he could claim to have nothing to do with the remotely located, compartmentalized, and relatively tiny gas chamber sector. As Gröning said himself:

> Part of living in Auschwitz was perfectly normal. […] It was like a small city. I had my unit, and gas chambers were irrelevant in that unit. There was one side of life in Auschwitz, and there was another, and the two were more or less separate.[26]

For the vast majority of German perpetrators who worked within the camp, it was almost as if the mass killing of human beings was not even happening. Such mind games were easier to maintain in Auschwitz than in the Operation Reinhard camps because the former, unlike the latter, was first and foremost a *work* (not extermination) camp.[27] Unlike at Auschwitz, in the Operation Reinhard camps every worker, strategy, objective, and building was much more closely connected to the sole task of extermination. Thus, the Germans based in Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka had to be more proficient than those at Auschwitz in the art of self-deception and delusional thinking.

Even at Auschwitz, however, there were occasions when, even for the most determined of officers, confronting death was unavoidable. Höss, for example, saw things he wished he had not. But he relied on certain strategies to deal with such encounters. When upset, he "found it

impossible to go back to my home and my family." Instead, "I would mount my horse and ride, until I had chased the terrible picture away."[28] Germans at Auschwitz able to control how much perceptual information they were exposed to lived, as Willem A. Visser't Hooft put it, "in a twilight between knowing and not knowing."[29]

The power to know what was happening in concept but not in perceptual reality was even greater for the leadership comfortably based in Berlin. Walther Funk, the Nazi Minister of Economic Affairs, said of the atrocities after the war: "That was just the trouble; we were all blinded."[30] Funk is largely right, except that during the war (even after it; see below footnote) he actively chose not to look in fear of what he might see. After the war and at the Nuremberg trials, the Allied forces used their greater power to reverse the Nazi leadership's earlier option to engage in avoidance by forcing them to view the chilling liberation film footage of the insides of Nazi concentration camps. Suddenly unable to so easily avoid the perceptually intense reality, some of these leading Nazis reacted by trying to look away from the footage playing before them, many looked stunned, shocked, and, for the most part, shameful. One of them—again the "blinded" Funk—could not help sobbing and crying.[31]

If, as Stangl said, the Germans in the camps rarely ever saw any death, such purposeful avoidance powerfully aided in reducing their feelings of responsibility for the end result. Much like those in the Peer Administers Shock condition, all those indirectly involved could argue that they were not responsible because they never directly hurt anybody. Stangl was keen to point out, "Of course, I wasn't 'involved' in that sense… Not in the operational sense."[32] This seemingly trivial difference was of great importance to Stangl—as perhaps best illustrated by how upset he became when accused of being more directly involved:

> Stangl, insisting that he had never shot into a crowd of people, appeared to be more indignant about this accusation than about anything else, and to find irrelevant the fact that, whether he shot into the group or not, these very same people died anyway, less than two hours later, through actions ultimately under his control.[33]

After the war, Eichmann became equally indignant when he was accused of beating a boy to death.[34] A similar reaction might have been expected had participants who completed Milgram's Peer Administers Shock

condition been accused of directly inflicting shocks on the learner. Actually, every German perpetrator right up to Hitler not involved in the "operational sense" could rely on Stangl's strain resolving logic. Eichmann, for one, repeatedly argued, "I never killed a single one. […] I never killed anyone and I never gave the order to kill anyone."[35] Eichmann said that after the Wannsee Conference he:

> felt something of the satisfaction of Pilate, because I felt entirely innocent of any guilt. The leading figures of the Reich at the time had spoken at the Wannsee Conference, the "Popes" had given their orders; it was up to me to obey, and that is what I bore in mind over the future years.[36]

The problem for Eichmann was that he was willing to admit (or could not deny) that he was, in his own words, guilty of "aiding and abetting…"[37] Although he was purposefully (and, in terms of his career, opportunistically) lost in the fog of responsibility ambiguity, this admission directly connected him to the Holocaust. So, in the sense that he knew without knowing, Eichmann, irrespective of all his strain resolving coping mechanisms, was guilty. No matter how he spun the mind games in his head, he (like Milgram) *was* responsible for his harmful contributions, and he knew it. "I created a situation for myself in which I could find a spark of inner calm. The main medicament was: I have nothing to do with it all personally. They are not my people. […] But my nervousness got worse. I had no rest at night."[38]

The reason Eichmann never personally killed anyone was that, in all likelihood, he was no killer. To be clear, *from his desk* Eichmann proved more than capable of sending millions of people to their deaths. But, remove the distancing factors offered by bureaucracy and technology, Eichmann—intense anti-semite or not, evil monster or not—was impotent, squeamish, and likely harmless.[39] Consider, for example, his timid reaction to someone describing the gassing procedure: "I was horrified. My nerves aren't strong enough…I can't listen to such things…without their affecting me. Even today, if I see someone with a deep cut, I have to look away."[40] As mentioned, during the winter of 1941–1942, the meek Eichmann was sent to Chełmno to gather a detailed account of the camp's extermination process. The experience left him so shaken that he both forgot to time the operation with his stopwatch and politely declined an offer to observe, through a peephole, the victims in their

death throes.[41] For Eichmann, worse was to come. Asked to record the Chełmno process, he felt obliged to observe the visually intense end result. He saw:

> the most horrifying thing I had ever seen in my life. The gassing van drove up to a somewhat long pit, the doors were opened, and the corpses were tossed out. It was as if they were still alive, their limbs were so supple. [...] and I can still picture the way a civilian pulled teeth out with a pair of pliers. Then I cleared out.[42]

Even the Germans most directly involved in operations at Auschwitz-Birkenau could hold on to the strain resolving logic that, like Höss, Stangl, and even the more distant Eichmann, they too were *only* indirectly involved. They *merely* dropped Zyklon-B crystals or switched on a diesel motor—they were *just* technicians. They never killed anybody, not personally anyway. If such coping mechanisms failed to salve their consciences, they, much like Milgram's "obedient" participants, could tell themselves or others that they would never have done such things of their own accord. They were just following orders. As said, the German gas chamber supervisor Werner Karl Dubois, who participated in both the T4 program and Operation Reinhard:

> What should be taken into account is that we did not act on our own initiative, but in the context of the Reich's Final Solution to the Jewish problem.[43]

Similarly, Höss was keen to point out, "I must obey, since I was a soldier."[44] But, again, like many of Milgram's participants, he also continued under the sneaking suspicion that he could probably act with impunity. "You see, in Germany it was understood that if something went wrong, then the man who gave the orders was responsible."[45] Eichmann was no different. Despite the occasional nervous feelings of responsibility, he suspected that because he did not *appear* responsible for directly killing anyone, he too (opportunistically) believed himself "covered…"[46] Hidden within the fog of responsibility ambiguity, Eichmann knew that he could (and did) blame the Nazi Popes. Höss's men no doubt blamed him, he blamed Himmler, and Himmler blamed Hitler. But, again, Hitler never killed any Jews, not *directly* anyway. Perhaps Milgram was right when he argued that the same psychological

process inherent within modern bureaucratic organizations influenced both his "obedient" participants and the Nazi perpetrators.[47] That is, when goal achievement is, as it was in both these cases, divided between groups of specialists, fragmentation of the overall process enables the displacement of personal responsibility. Under such a system, the person ultimately responsible for the evil act seems to disappear.

If displacing responsibility for one's actions did not ease the "burdening of the soul," another technique capable of subduing such feelings was to concede that all involved were a little bit responsible. As the bookkeeper Oskar Gröning, for example, claimed, he was only a "small cog in the gears." But if all perpetrators are a little bit responsible, no single person is ultimately responsible. This kind of thinking can reduce personal feelings of responsibility because everyone is just a little bit guilty of what Eichmann earlier called "aiding and abetting…"—a relatively minor infraction during the Holocaust (so they liked to tell themselves). Most certainly, at no other point or place during the entire Holocaust did responsibility ambiguity at every link in the organizational chain reach the heights it did at Auschwitz.

Because Germans working in the most advanced gassing camps could all argue that they had neither heard, seen, nor touched the end result of the extermination process, all could claim that they were not personally responsible. And if, to some extent, they could convince themselves they were not personally responsible, then the vast majority felt little or no "burdening of the soul," and thus they were at a much lower risk than members of the shooting squads of becoming "neurotics" or "savages." Because the camp workers had the option of perceptually circumventing the frightful consequences of their contributions, they were comparatively more capable of carrying on, of contributing to the apparently "necessary" yet "humane" murder of other human beings on an unimaginable scale.

A Peaceful and Gentle Death

Another factor of the "humane death" that many Nazi perpetrators valued highly was that the method of killing civilians should leave no postmortem indications of pain or violence. Preferably, victims' bodies would show no bloody wounds or other signs of physical trauma like bruising. Also, no signs of defecation, vomiting, or frothing at the mouth or nose. Finally, a victim's postmortem countenance should appear calm and neutral as if to suggest they were peacefully sleeping. It was the T4 chemist

August Becker who perhaps best captured all this when, as mentioned, he complained to his superiors about certain gas van operators: "In order to get the Aktion finished as quickly as possible the driver presses down on the accelerator as far as it will go. As a result the persons to be executed die of suffocation and do not doze off as was planned." He then added, "It has proved that if my instructions are followed and the levers are properly adjusted death comes faster and the prisoners fall asleep peacefully. Distorted faces and excretions, such as were observed before, no longer occur."[48] On the measure of eliminating postmortem indicators of a violent death, gassing was clearly preferable to using firearms because it did not leave the horrific wounds produced by the early mass shootings. But different types of gas produced different results. Kurt Gerstein (the Chief Disinfection Officer) argued that carbon monoxide gassing left a greater mess than Zyklon-B. When the doors of the carbon monoxide chamber opened, "the bodies were thrown out blue, wet with sweat and urine, the legs covered with excrement and menstrual blood."[49] For this reason, Höss preferred Zyklon-B:

> There was no noticeable change in the bodies and no sign of convulsions or discolorations. Only after the bodies had been left lying for some time, that is to say after several hours, did the usual death stains appear in the places where they had lain. Soiling through opening of the bowels was also rare. There were no signs of wounding of any kind. The faces showed no distortion.[50]

Even if Höss's impression was an exaggeration (and it probably was),[51] because Germans at Auschwitz were able to purposefully avoid encountering what actually took place in the gas chamber, the untested belief that Zyklon-B left no signs of a painful death fulfilled the strain resolving role of another Milgram-like "balm to the…conscience."

Instantaneous Death

The final characteristic the Nazi's most "humane" means of killing was that it killed instantaneously. The victim should be dead before he or she could register any pain. As Browning, clearly astounded, notes, "a quick death without agony of anticipation was considered an example of human compassion!"[52] On this measure, no method could compete with a bullet in the back of the neck (but, of course, killing with guns failed in other ways, most notably, the anticipation of death and the infliction of visually disturbing wounds).

Although Zyklon-B performed well on most of the four conditions, when compared with a bullet in the back of the neck, it still killed slowly. It could be argued that the introduction of the numerous techniques of deception (one of which applied after the docile victims were locked inside the chamber) was, at least in part, introduced with the purpose of addressing this weakness. Again, it was preferable that the victims never saw death coming. But clearly such measures were not enough because the Nazi planners attempted to directly increase the speed with which Zyklon-B killed. For example, on one rare occasion when Höss chose to observe the gassings through a peephole in the gas chamber door, he noticed:

> those who were standing nearest to the induction vents were killed at once. It can be said that about one-third died straightaway. The remainder staggered about and began to scream and struggle for air. The screaming, however, soon changed to the death rattle and in a few minutes all lay still.[53]

Just as Milgram would later tweak his procedure, Höss's observation appears to have stimulated a subtle change to the design of the gas chamber. While Crematoria II and III were, as mentioned, designed as mirror images of one another, the link to the Allied aerial photo presented in the previous chapter revealed one slight difference:

> gas introduction columns of crematorium II were arrayed in a straight line, roughly along the longitudinal axis of the gas chamber, whereas in crematorium III they were spaced in pairs on both sides of the axis. This placement was meant to ensure rapid and uniform spread of the poison inside the chamber.[54]

This innovation ensured that more victims died, as Höss put it, "straightaway." Although Zyklon-B still killed slower than a shot to the neck, it did its work faster than any other type of gas available to the Nazis. Höss elaborated:

> The doctors explained to me that the prussic acid had a paralysing effect on the lungs, but its action was so quick and strong that death came before the convulsions could set in, and in this its effects differed from those produced by carbon monoxide or by a general oxygen deficiency.[55]

As we have seen, Wirth had tried to remedy the relative sluggishness of carbon monoxide by lowering the height of the ceiling in Treblinka's second set of gas chambers. But even with this innovation, his method could not compete with Zyklon-B. As Wellers notes:

> Gerhard Peters, the general manager of Degesch, the firm that developed Zyclon B and delivered it to Auschwitz, was able to establish scientifically that hydrocyanic acid is six times more toxic than chlorine, thirty-four times more than carbon monoxide, and 750 times more than chloroform.[56]

Without a doubt, the carbon monoxide exhaust fumes used during Operation Reinhard could be an efficient means of killing large numbers of humans (as was leaving freight cars full of Jews outside Treblinka for too long in the intense summer heat, as Eberl did), but concerns lingered about celerity. These concerns explain why Pfannenstiel went to Belzec armed with a stopwatch. It is interesting to note in this context that a month after Himmler's July 1942 visit to Auschwitz where he observed Bunker II in action, Kurt Gerstein and Rolf Günther were instructed (probably by the SS-Reichsführer himself) to pay Wirth a visit at Belzec. As Hilberg points out:

> They had about 200 pounds of Zyklon with them and were about to convert the carbon monoxide chambers to the hydrogen cyanide method. The unwelcome guests stayed to watch a gassing which took an especially long time (over three hours) because the diesel engine had failed. To Wirth's great embarrassment and mortification, Gerstein timed the operation with a stopwatch. Facing the greatest crisis of his career, Wirth dropped his pride and asked Gerstein "not to propose any other type of gas chamber in Berlin." Gerstein obliged, ordering the Zyklon to be buried on the pretext that it had spoiled. Höss and Wirth were henceforth enemies.[57]

The two men were enemies because the delivery of Zyklon-B clearly signaled to Wirth that he had lost to Höss in the fierce competition to discover a more perfect solution to the seemingly unresolvable "Jewish problem": the most "humane" means of converting the Führer's wish into reality. According to Konrad Morgen, after the regime dumped him, all that was left to Wirth before he was killed in an ambush in Italy near the war's end was invidious bragging rights: Höss (who had no T4 Euthanasia experience) was his "untalented pupil."[58]

An interesting question remains. If only work Jews had to face the horrific realities of the insides of the gas chambers, why were Germans who could, and typically did, avoid such spectacles, so concerned about finding a method of extermination that killed quickly, cleanly, imperceptibly, and covertly? Put simply, many Nazis believed extermination to be necessary, and for the German camp staff Zyklon-B helped deactivate the censuring gaze of their guilty conscience.[59] If they were somewhat involved in the killing process, at least they could tell themselves it was humane.[60] As Hans Mommsen notes: "Inhumanity had first to be declared as 'humanity' before it could be put into technocratic practice, with moral inhibitions thereafter reduced to a minimum."[61]

After the war, Höss tried to explain all this to the Allied forces when he "spoke proudly of his 'improvements.'"[62] But his indignant audience could not comprehend his logic—his words were surely the ramblings of a madman. Höss then tried to bridge their understanding by adding that if not for him, many of the victims would have died more horrifically. But a frightful flaw remained in Höss's logic. If he and the other Nazi innovators had never introduced their "humane improvements," killing by other, more gruesome, methods likely would have stimulated defiance among the ranks (much as it did when the SS Cavalry Brigade refused to implement Himmler's direct orders in 1941 to shoot women and children in the Pripet marshes using a more traditional military-style execution technique). Thus, without the "humane" enhancements, the number of victims would have been much lower (and Himmler and Heydrich's little experiment would probably have been abandoned in favor of other more "realistic" solutions).[63] But instead, innovators and problem-solvers like Höss provided the remote and blinkered Nazi leadership with ever-greater capacity to eliminate an ever-expanding array of so-called inferiors.

Some of the above quotations capture why, for the Nazi leadership, Höss was more than just the most efficient of Nazi mass murderers. He was really the epitome of the perfect Nazi in the (killing) field—the kind of executioner genocidal managers like Himmler and Heydrich greatly desired and heavily relied upon. In terms of efficiency, Höss was creative, determined, and ambitious. But he was also controlled, outwardly unemotional, and thus sufficiently "hard," as they termed it.[64] Despite his masked performance of "hardness," during the implementation of his difficult duties, Höss also managed to remain what Himmler termed "decent…" As the SS-Reichsführer said himself on 4 October 1943

during a speech where, to an audience of high ranking SS officers, he touched on the Holocaust:

> Most of you must know what it means to see a hundred corpses lie side by side, or five hundred, or a thousand. To have stuck this out and—excepting cases of human weakness—to have kept our integrity, that is what has made us hard. In our history, this is an unwritten and never-to-be-written page of glory…[65]

During the Holocaust some Germans had, as Himmler notes, fallen prey to human weakness: They were too "soft" and could not do what (apparently) needed to be done. Or worse, they abused their positions of power by opportunistically gratifying their pathological proclivity for sadism or penchant—perhaps stimulated by feelings of boredom—for unnecessary cruelty.[66] Decent Germans, according to Himmler, were never unnecessarily cruel. As he said in the same speech: "We shall never be rough and heartless when it is not necessary, that is clear. We Germans, who are the only people in the world who have a decent attitude towards animals, will also assume a decent attitude towards these human animals."[67] What could Himmler possibly have meant by such words? He was alluding to Jewish Kosher animal slaughter techniques which Himmler, like Hitler, believed to be inherently cruel and inhumane. In 1944, as Clemens Giese and Waldemar Kahler (both involved in the introduction of the November 1933 Nazi animal protection laws) noted:

> The animals protection movement, strongly promoted by the National Socialist government, has long demanded that animals be given anesthesia before being killed. The overwhelming majority of the German people have long condemned killing without anesthesia, a practice universal among Jews though not confined to them, …as against the cultivated sensitivities of our society.[68]

When the sensitive Himmler instructed that "human animals" be killed—much like with other animals—it was preferable these acts be undertaken without cruelty—all were gently to go to sleep. Unlike the "weak" Germans who inflicted extraneous cruelties on their human victims, Höss had no interest in or time for such base pursuits. Thus, always with his eye fixed firmly on achieving the bureaucratic goal at hand, Höss proved to be a far deadlier executioner than the pathological and tyrannical killers.

Therefore, what Himmler—and clearly Hitler—liked about executioners like Höss was that he was the kind of person who would "carry out mass murder with self-control and 'decency' rather than with sadism" (the last of which the Nazis deemed a crime for which some Germans faced prosecution).[69] Höss, the consummate professional, was what the Nazi leadership believed to be an efficient yet, were possible, *civilized* killer. This is why, as mentioned, Höss could say with a straight face:

> I find it incredible that human beings could ever turn into such beasts. The way the 'greens' [conventional criminals] knocked the French Jewesses about, tearing them to pieces, killing them with axes, and throttling them—it was simply gruesome.[70]

Such interpersonal violence was barbaric, cruel, and unbecoming of a professional, rational, sensitive, humane, and thus civilized Nazi executioner.[71] To use these adjectives in the same sentence as the noun Nazi may cause an incredulous snicker among many readers. But to do so perhaps risks missing something which, in my view, is crucial yet so frequently misunderstood when it comes to the Holocaust: For the most expert of Nazi genocidaires like Höss, the distasteful duty of killing was a higher calling because, as Hayes observes, the Nazis genuinely believed "that the Reich's expansion to the east was part of a civilizing process that expanded European culture at the expense of supposedly barbaric Asia."[72] Of course, for many years now undefeated Europeans (and their descendants) of all stripes have relied on this "Nazi"-like logic to justify the expansion of their settler colonies. And with reference to the word "humane," as Neitzel and Welzer incisively observe:

> Ideologists of annihilation like Himmler or practitioners like Rudolf Höss continually stressed that destroying human lives was an unpleasant task that ran contrary to their "humane" instincts. But the ability to overcome such scruples was seen as a measure of one's character. It was the coupling of murder and morality – the realization that unpleasant acts were necessary and the will to carry out those acts *in defiance of* feelings of human sympathy – that allowed the perpetrators of genocide to see themselves as "respectable" people, as people whose hearts, in Höss' words, "were not bad."[73]

Perhaps there is a little more to the sociology of Norbert Elias than previously imagined.

As Bauman notes, extermination through work, the Zyklon-B stationary gas chamber, and the industrialized cremation process finished the war as "the most perfect" solution to the Jewish problem that "the Nazis had time to invent…"[74] It was cheap, profitable, highly efficient, *and* the most "humane" method they could find (thus suggesting there might exist a dialectical link between the apparently incompatible Bauman on rationalization and Elias on civility).[75] In the end, Höss beat out people like Jeckeln, Lange, and Wirth to win the competition to fulfill Hitler's wish mainly because his method of killing rated highest on the most important of the four characteristics discussed above: Zyklon-B did not require Germans to touch, see, or (barely) hear the killing of their victims. And as a result, these Germans could convincingly engage in strain resolving acts of self-deception, telling themselves that the gassings "probably" killed without any anticipation of death, killed without leaving any marks indicative of a painful death, and killed quickly, even if, in reality, this was not true.

But despite Höss's success in this competition, the leading Nazis never found his methods completely satisfactory. As Bauman implies in the above quotation, the method of killing at Auschwitz was not perfect per se: In reality, it did not eliminate the anticipation of death, it did not kill instantaneously, and it did leave marks indicative of a painful death. What the Nazis ultimately desired was a method of eliminating unwanted civilians that did not necessitate killing. Even before the start of the Soviet invasion, Nazi realists had pursued and almost discovered what the Chief Doctor of the SS, Ernst-Robert von Grawitz, termed the "perfect solution to the problem"[76]—sterilization.

The Search for the Most Efficient, Profitable, and Humane Method of Killing (Without Killing)

As Höss and others competed to kill more efficiently, a group of Nazi scientists undertook a variety of experiments to invent a cheap, rapid, and surreptitious technique of mass sterilization. It was believed that by sterilizing those deemed inferior, large categories of people like Jews, Gypsies, and other groups could be eliminated through natural death. Moreover, by eliminating the ability of these "inferiors" to procreate, all could safely be retained as a long-term source of slave labor, thereby providing the opportunity for all Germans "to pursue higher pleasures."[77]

The search for a solution started in March 1941 as the Soviet invasion was being planned. After corresponding with the T4's Victor Brack, Himmler became interested in mass sterilization as it might be applied to the expanding Jewish problem. Hilberg outlines the general contents of Brack's correspondence with Himmler:

> It started as a sober account of the possibilities of X-rays in the field of sterilization and castration. Preliminary investigations by medical experts of the chancellery, wrote Brack, had indicated that small doses of X-rays achieved only temporary sterilization; large doses caused burns. Having come to this conclusion, Brack ignored it completely and continued with the following fantastic scheme: The persons to be "processed"…would step up to a counter to be asked some questions or to fill out forms. Thus occupied, the unsuspecting candidate for sterilization would face the window for two or three minutes while the official sitting behind the counter would throw a switch which would release X-rays through two tubes pointing at the victim. With twenty such counters (cost: 20,000-30,000 marks apiece) 3000-4000 persons could be sterilized daily.[78]

Also in March 1941, Himmler expressed interest in Professor Carl Clauberg's nonsurgical attempts at female sterilization. The technique called for circumventing conception by injecting an irritant into the uterus. Himmler requested Clauberg's transfer to the women's concentration camp at Ravensbrück where he could perfect his method. At the time, however, Clauberg held no interest in relocating and negotiations between the two ceased. Perhaps because Hitler initially disapproved of this potential solution, Himmler's interest in sterilization waned.[79]

In October 1941, however, Adolf Pokorny, a retired army medial practitioner, contacted Himmler in regards to another possible mass sterilization technique. Pokorny informed Himmler about a Dr. Madaus at Radebeul-Dresden who had apparently sterilized mice and rats with a serum extracted from a South American plant called Caladium seguinum.[80] In reference to Himmler's preferred source of slave labor, Pokorny pointed out:

> If, on the basis of this research, it were possible to produce a drug which, after a relatively short time, effects an imperceptible sterilization on human beings, then we would have a powerful new weapon at our disposal. The thought alone that the three million Bolsheviks, who are at present German prisoners, could be sterilized so that they could be used as laborers but be prevented from reproduction, opens the most far-reaching perspectives.[81]

Despite the Führer's disapproval of this strategy, on 10 March 1942 Himmler ordered Pohl to offer Madaus a research contract to undertake experiments on concentration camp prisoners, and within six months Madaus had agreed to the transfer.[82]

A few months later, in June of 1942, Brack felt it important to remind Himmler of the potential advantages of sterilization over killing. "Castration by X-rays…is not only relatively cheap but can also be performed on many thousands in the shortest time."[83] He also pointed out that Chief Reichsleiter Philipp Bouhler had been able to set up an experimental research program. Soon after, ex-T4 employee and medical doctor Horst Schumann began experiments on men and women at Auschwitz.[84] Around the same time, on 7 July 1942, Clauberg finally accepted Himmler's offer to move to Auschwitz to start an experimental program on who Clauberg termed "unworthy women…"[85]

All of these programs ended in failure, the only outcome being the misery and misfortune of all those unfortunately selected as research subjects. Had just one of these programs succeeded in producing a perfect method of killing without killing, Hilberg is convinced the net of potential human targets would have widened:

> In the very conception of these explorations, the destruction process threatened to escape from its narrowly defined channel and to engulf everyone within reach who might be branded as "inferior." Already, the fate of *Mischlinge* of the first degree hung in the balance while the Interior Ministry waited for the perfection of mass sterilization techniques. In consequence of the failure of these experiments a development was arrested which had spelled in its dim outlines the doom of large sections of the population of Europe.[86]

As Ernst Kaltenbrunner (Heydrich's replacement) said in 1944, "Germany must see to it…that the populations of eastern Europe and most of the Balkan and Danubian countries are forced to die out as a result of sterilization and the destruction of the ruling class in these countries."[87]

By the end of the same year, even those Himmler believed to be ugly were being lined up for extermination.[88] Clearly, the less the method psychologically burdened the most direct perpetrators' conscience, the easier it would be for them to perform their tasks. And the easier the task, the wider the potential pool of targets. Interestingly (or disturbingly):

> When Clauberg returned from Russia to Germany in October, 1951, he had the first opportunity in ten years to tell interviewing reporters that just prior to his capture he had perfected his sterilization method after all. The new method consisted of a simple injection, and he was now looking forward to its application, albeit only in "special cases."[89]

If Clauberg had perfected his method of sterilization before the end of the war and then used it on "inferior" populations, it is likely that he would have surpassed Höss in the rationionally driven competition to discover the most "humane" method of converting the Führer's wish into reality. But, of course, these Nazi scientists failed, leaving the regime with the next best option: the most advanced gassing systems at Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, and finally Auschwitz-Birkenau.[90]

Conclusion

Although implementing an efficient (formally rational) system of mass murder was of great importance to the Nazi regime, it was equally important for the perpetrators across the division of labor to find a method of killing perceived to be "humane." Four main factors were involved: Optimally victims had (1) no anticipation of death; (2) need not be touched, seen, or heard when being killed; (3) died gently; and (4) instantaneously. As the victims' horrific experiences clearly illustrate, in reality the most popular methods of killing in places like Auschwitz were not "humane" experiences at all. "Humane killing," as the perpetrators saw it, was probably a contradiction. A method of killing only had to feel sufficiently humane to them to act as a strain resolving mechanism. That is, much like the all-important responsibility ambiguity, these kinds of perpetrator beliefs played a crucial role in reducing the so-called burdening of the soul. And the less the soul was burdened, the easier it became for the leadership to persuade, tempt, or coerce the most directly involved ordinary Germans into inflicting harm on others.

Perpetrator perceptions over "humane" methods of killing might help increase our understanding of what it was that was so *moderate* about German anti-semitism. That is, unlike the Eastern Europeans and their barbaric pogroms where Jews were clubbed to death by the "Death-dealer of Kovno," most "moderately antisemitic" Germans would only kill Jews with more "humane"—clean, emotionally distant, and civilized—methods. Although many ordinary Germans had come to agree

that *something* needed to be done about the "Jewish problem"—thus indisputably rendering them anti-semitic—their more sensitive constitutions rendered the Eastern European pogrom an offensive final solution. The Wehrmacht colonel who observed the death-dealer in action believed it "probably the most frightful event that I had seen during the course of two world wars," and aroused in him and other Germans present a similar feeling of "horror and outrage." And when offended like this, Germans were commonly observed to behave in ways that sharply conflicted with the popular perception of the cruel and sadistic Nazi killer. As Arendt observed:

> in Rumania even the S.S. were taken aback, and occasionally frightened, by the horrors of old-fashioned, spontaneous pogroms on a gigantic scale; they often intervened to save Jews from sheer butchery, so that the killing could be done in what, according to them, was a civilized way.[91]

Thus, from this perspective, the anti-semitism common among Germans was, relatively speaking, much more moderate compared to that found in some Eastern European countries. The problem, however, with this moderate anti-semitism was that it stimulated a demand for a more "humane" and "civilized" method of killing that happened also to advance killing efficiency enormously.

Thus, in places like Auschwitz, it became possible for only moderately anti-semitic or even indifferent Germans to easily and repeatedly participate in a killing process capable of exterminating Jews on an unprecedented scale. And because the most advanced killing methods hardly "burdened the soul" (unlike the less organized and more repulsive pogroms where intense feelings of hatred quickly fizzled out), the German's seemingly banal machinery of destruction could continue consuming the lives of victims with no end in sight. It would seem to me that this is how and why moderate anti-semitism so common among Hitler's willing executioners ended up being so much more deadly and destructive. It is here that I believe we find an answer to Bauer's "real question" of how during the Holocaust so many moderately anti-semitic Germans were so quickly converted into willing executioners.

After the war when Germans were bombarded with the horrifying evidence of the Holocaust, many Nazi sympathizers rejected the Final Solution's methods, but in many cases the moderate anti-semitism

remained. Consider, for example, one German architect's rather defensive, candid, and no doubt common postwar reaction to the Holocaust:

> [T]he Jews … were a problem. They came from the east. You should see them in Poland; the lowest class of people, full of lice, dirty and poor, running about in their Ghettos in filthy caftans. They came here, and got rich by unbelievable methods after the first war. They occupied all the good places … in medicine and law and government posts! … [What the Nazis did] of course … was no way to settle the Jewish problem. But there was a problem and it had to be settled some way.[92]

As Koonz points out, after the war the conscience of many respectable yet clearly Nazified Germans (like that above) remained untroubled, "because they could forget their passivity in the face of white-collar persecution and simultaneously express moral outrage about the violent attacks and coarse language common in the hardcore Nazi subculture."[93] Somewhat like the architect, one German POW said to another during a bugged conversation: "I quite agree that the Jews had to be turned out, that was obvious, but the manner in which it was done was absolutely wrong, and the present hatred [directed at post-war Germany] is the result."[94] From such evidence, Felix Römer concludes (much like during the Obedience studies where Milgram's application of greater power typically trumped the participants' more benign individual preferences) that even when Germans in the armed forces professed their belief that "extreme violence against defenseless civilians…cross[ed] a line, they were" still, far more often than not, "capable of such violence, the minute group pressure of the circumstances demanded it."[95] All this aside, perhaps these moderately anti-semitic Germans would have been more amenable to the Nazi's preferred but unperfected final solution of mass sterilization: the most "humane" method of killing (without killing). Maybe Norbert Elias was right after all, "if humanity can survive the violence of our age, [our descendants] might consider us as late barbarians."[96]

NOTES

1. Quoted in Pingel (1993, p. 192).
2. Pingel (1993, pp. 192–193).
3. Quoted in Klee et al. (1988, p. 201).

4. Gutman (1990d, p. 1750, as cited in Berger 2002, p. 68).
5. Milgram (1974, p. 159).
6. Höss (2001, pp. 149–150).
7. Höss (2001, p. 154). In conflict with this, Wistrich (2001, p. 228) argues that Höss "never personally attended mass executions…."
8. Quoted in Naumann (1966, p. 249).
9. Quoted in Wistrich (2001, p. 28).
10. Seibel (2005, p. 351).
11. Quoted in Sereny (1974, p. 157). Those Germans in the forest indeed saw a great deal. In the Maiden forest (Chełmno), for example, one SS guard was noted for standing on the edge of a mass grave where the Jewish work detail was busy stacking adult victims head-to-toe. The guard then used a stick to identify small gaps in the stacked bodies where Jewish workers were to stuff children's corpses (Cesarani 2016, p. 462).
12. Hayes (2017, pp. 143–144).
13. Quoted in Sereny (1974, p. 203).
14. As Hayes (2017, p. 144) notes, "among the camp guards, as in the shooting squads, a fateful element was self-centeredness, a preoccupation with one's own challenges rather than the pain being inflicted."
15. Wistrich (2001, p. 231).
16. Levi (1988, p. 31).
17. Quoted in Toland (1976, p. 703). For another example of Hitler using the term "humane" in relation to the Holocaust, see Mommsen (1986, pp. 109–110).
18. Toland (1976, p. 703).
19. See Schelvis (2007, p. 94).
20. Goldhagen (1996).
21. According to Kühl, cruelty could serve a variety of functions. For example, partaking in acts of cruelty can strengthen perpetrator solidarity (2016, p. 112). It can also help perpetrators convince themselves about the righteousness of their decision to start and remain working within a genocidal organization (pp. 110–111). And in the macho world of Nazism, had a German from the start presented themselves to their comrades as a "hard man," then to maintain presentational consistency, they could not then go "soft" on state enemies as the violence escalated (pp. 111, 120–121). Perpetrators might also inflict nonfatal blows on some victims to push the wider group more quickly through the extermination system, thereby reducing the formation of what their boss's feared most: "tie ups" (quoted in Angrick and Klein 2009, p. 149). As mentioned, it was not unusual during the Obedience studies for Williams to impatiently push participants who failed to move at a brisk pace during the allocated one-hour time slots (see Milgram 1965). Finally, during what

can become a repetitive and routinized task, acts of cruelty can also aid in relieving perpetrators' feelings of boredom (e.g., see Goldhagen 1996, p. 259 and Schelvis 2007, p. 113). This arguably occurred during the Obedience studies when, as mentioned, the experimenter occasionally broke out of his usual robotic delivery and would—seemingly playing a game of cat and mouse—invent his own rhetorical prod-like devices in an attempt to entrap participants into inflicting further shocks.

22. One quite destructive method of killing during the Holocaust that did necessitate the establishment of a tactile connection between German perpetrators and their victims was death by lethal injection. This fairly common method of killing is probably the present study's most salient counterfactual example. For example, in his postwar interrogation the German doctor Wilhelm Gustav Schueppe admitted that between September 1941 and March 1942 a score of physicians and SD disguised as medics working under his supervision at the Kiev Pathological Institute killed more than 100,000 civilians using lethal injections—a method of killing where cause is directly connected to effect (Friedlander 1995, p. 142). Lethal injection was also used at Auschwitz, killing several tens of thousands of victims (see Lifton 1986, pp. 254–268). During Auschwitz's 14f13 killing program, it was established that fast-acting phenol injections were a cheaper means of killing unproductive laborers than, say, transporting them all the way back to Germany to be gassed in the T4 gas chambers (p. 255). Early on the injection site was changed from just below the elbow to the fifth rib space (thereby requiring the use of a long needle) because the latter technique killed much more quickly (p. 258). Having said this, Auschwitz's advancing gassing technique supplanted the lethal injection technique (p. 257).

23. Again, see, for example, Friedlander (1995, p. 142) and Lifton (1986, pp. 254–268).

24. Quoted in Bar-On (1989, p. 196).

25. Quoted in Milgram (1974, p. 38).

26. Quoted in Geyer (2005).

27. See Mommsen (1986, p. 126).

28. Höss (2001, p. 155).

29. Quoted in Sereny (1995, p. 335).

30. Quoted in Gilbert (1947, p. 406).

31. According to Gilbert's notebook (1947, p. 45, as cited in Schwan 2001, pp. 70–71): "Schacht objects to being made to look at the film as I ask him to move over; turns away, folds arms, gazes into gallery…(Film starts). Frank nods at authentication at introduction of film […] Fritzsche (who had not seen any part of film before) already looks pale and sits aghast as it starts with scenes of prisoners burned alive in a barn […]

Keitel wipes brow, takes off headphones […] Hess glares at screen looking like a ghoul with sunken eyes over the footlamp […] Keitel puts on headphone, glares at screen out of the corner of his eye […] von Neurath has head bowed, doesn't look […] Funk covers his eyes, looks away […] Sauckel mops brow […] Frank swallows hard, blinks eyes, trying to stifle tears […] Fritzsche watches intensely with knitted brow, cramped at the end of his seat, evidently in agony […] Goering keeps leaning on balustrade, not watching most of the time, looking droopy […] Funk mumbles something under his breath […] Streicher keeps watching, immobile except for an occasional squint […] Funk now in tears, blows nose, wipes eyes, looks down […] Frick shakes head at illustration of "violent death."—Frank mutters "Horrible!" […] Rosenberg fidgets, peeks at screen, bows head, looks to see how others are reacting […] Seyss-Inquart stoic throughout […] Speer looks very sad, swallows hard […] Defense attorneys are now muttering, "for God's sake—terrible." Raeder watches without budging […] von Papen sits with hand over brow, looking down, has not looked at screen yet […] Hess keeps looking bewildered…piles of dead are shown in a slave labor camp […] von Schirach watching intently, gasps, whispers to Sauckel […] Funk crying now […] Goering looks sad, leaning on elbow […] Doenitz has head bowed, no longer watching […] Sauckel shudders at picture of Buchenwald crematorium oven…as human skin lampshade is shown, Streicher says, "I don't believe that" […] Goering coughing […] Attorneys gasping […] Now Dachau […] Schacht still not looking […] Frank nods his head bitterly and says, "Horrible!" […] Rosenberg still fidgeting, leans forward, looks around, leans back, hangs head […] Fritzsche, pale biting lips, really seems in agony […] Doenitz has head buried in his hands […] Keitel now bowing head […] Ribbentrop looks up at screen as British officer starts to speak, saying he has already buried 17,000 corpses […] Frank biting his nails […] Frick shakes his head incredulously at speech of female doctor describing treatment and experiments on female prisoners at Belsen […] As Kramer is shown, Funk says with a choking voice, "The dirty swine!" […] Ribbentrop sitting with pursed lips and blinking eyes, not looking at screen […] Funk crying bitterly, claps [*sic*] hand over mouth as women's naked corpses are thrown into pit […] Keitel and Ribbentrop look up at mention of tractor clearing corpses, see it, then hang their heads […] Streicher shows signs of disturbance for the first time […] Film ends. After the showing of the film, Hess remarks, "I don't believe it." Goering whispers to him to keep quiet, his own cockiness quite gone. Streicher says something about "perhaps in the last days." Fritzsche retorts mournfully, "Million? In the last

days—No." Otherwise there is gloomy silence as the prisoners file out of the courtroom."

32. Quoted in Sereny (1974, p. 57).
33. Sereny (1974, p. 124).
34. See Arendt (1984, p. 109).
35. Quoted in Todorov (1999, p. 152, as cited in Wistrich 2001, p. 231). See also Arendt (1984, p. 22). That Eichmann never gave orders to kill is certainly questionable (see Cesarani 2016, p. 445).
36. Cesarani (2004, p. 277). Cesarani continues, "If Eichmann had been consistent, and stood by his Pontius Pilate defence, he could have admitted many acts and simply washed his hands of them. Instead, he continued to deny and evade responsibility, day after day. Such tactics begged the question of why he should have felt absolved of guilt if he did hardly anything to justify a bad conscience."
37. Quoted in Arendt (1984, p. 246).
38. Quoted in Kulcsar et al. (1966, p. 39).
39. De Swaan (2015, pp. 22–23) argues, "Were the perpetrators banal? Arendt's thesis on the 'banality of evil' does not stand critical scrutiny, certainly not as applied to Adolf Eichmann or other Nazi leaders, nor for that matter to the rank-and-file killers. Her model might, however, fit the countless minor middle men of the Holocaust: the administrators in the civil service registry who passed on the names of the prospective victims, the local police who rounded them up, the engineers who transported them in cattle cars, the contractors who built the gas chambers and supplied the extermination camps…most of them, indeed, were in some sense banal." An important point De Swaan overlooks—and he is not alone in doing so (see Lozowick 2002, pp. 1–5, 270–275)—is that the Nazi's methods of extermination, with time, moved towards the optimal goal of ensuring that *every* German link in the wider organizational chain became *seemingly* banal "minor middle men." The greater every Germans' structural "remoteness from reality"—the horrific perceptual consequences of their contributions—the more likely they could or would argue they "*never realized*" in reality "*what [they were] doing*" (Arendt 1992, pp. 287–288, as cited in Lozowick 2002, p. 4). Armed with this excuse, all knew, as Eichmann himself put it, they were "covered." This, it seems to me, is the insightful meaning behind Arendt's controversial phrase *the banality of evil*.
40. Quoted in von Lang and Sibyll (1983, p. 76, as cited in Winters 2010, p. 59).
41. Browning (2004, p. 419).
42. Quoted in Fleming (1984, p. 74).
43. Quoted in Schelvis (2007, p. 246).
44. Höss (2001, p. 69).

45. Quoted in Porpora (1990, p. 17).
46. Quoted in Arendt (1984, p. 135).
47. Milgram (1974, pp. 175, 11).
48. Quoted in Arad et al. (1999, p. 420).
49. Quoted in Hilberg (1961a, p. 628).
50. Höss (2001, p. 198).
51. Some descriptions conflict with Höss's. For example, one surviving member of the Jewish Sonderkommando, Filip Müller, argued, "The gas took about ten to fifteen minutes to kill. The most horrible thing was when the doors of the gas chambers were opened—the unbearable sight: people were packed together like basalt, like blocks of stone. […] But near the Zyklon gas, there was a void. There was no one where the gas crystals went in. An empty space. Probably the victims realized that the gas worked strongest there. The people were battered. They struggled and fought in the darkness. They were covered in excrement, in blood, from ears and noses. […] It was awful. Vomit. Blood—from the ears and noses, probably even menstrual fluid. I'm sure of it" (quoted in Lanzmann 1995, p. 125). Based on the affidavit of a person named Nyiszli, "The corpses were pink in color, with green spots. Some had foam on their lips; other bled through the nose" (quoted in Hilberg 1961a, p. 627).
52. Browning (1998, p. 155).
53. Quoted in Piper (1998, p. 170).
54. Piper (1998, p. 167).
55. Höss (2001, p. 147). It is no coincidence that the leading Nazi's preferred and most "humane" methods of killing civilians coincided with their most preferred methods of suicide: Cyanide capsules and firearm wounds to the head. More research on this similarity is required.
56. Wellers (1993, p. 207).
57. Hilberg (1961a, pp. 571–572).
58. Quoted in Hilberg (1961a, p. 572).
59. Hilberg (1961a, p. 649).
60. Hilberg (1961a, p. 649). As Headland so perceptively observes, "The killings […] had to be disguised. Disguised—but for whose benefit? No outsider would ever see the reports (or so it was believed). And so if the obscuring and justification were there only for the Germans themselves, for the Einsatzgruppen officials, the Kommando leaders, for the RSHA officials, for the typists who typed the reports, and for the recipients of the reports, one still must ask certain questions" (1992, p. 77).
61. Mommsen (1997, p. 31).
62. Hilberg (1961a, p. 572).
63. The logic of Bernhard Lösener, who helped frame the 1935 Nuremberg Race Laws, was similarly flawed. In 1950, he argued that these laws

"were meant to bring order into what had become a chaotic situation and to mark the end of the persecution of the Jews" (Lösener 1961, pp. 262–313, as cited in Koonz 2003, p. 190). Although these laws likely reduced violent attacks on German Jews and *seemed* to usher in a new period of civility, they also made possible this enemy's disenfranchisement, impoverishment, and eventual extermination. As Koonz (2003, p. 224) argued with respect to all Germans: they "found it hard to grasp the reality that lawful, orderly persecution would turn out to be more deadly than random cruelty."

64. For Höss, it seems his hardness came by way of desensitization: "Flogging, too, was to be exercised in front of and under the control of the comrades." As Rudolf Höss recalled, "Eicke had issued orders that a minimum of one company of troops must be present during the infliction of these corporal punishments." Initially Höss felt "compelled to watch the whole procedure" and to listen to the screaming prisoner. "When the man began to scream, I went hot and cold all over." However, he managed to rid himself of empathy. "Later on, at the beginning of the war, I attended my first execution, but it did not affect me nearly so much as witnessing this corporal punishment." Afraid of being shamed for being a "weakling," Höss would never have admitted any "sympathy" for prisoners. "Outwardly cold and even stony, but with most deeply disturbed inner feelings," he fulfilled his duties no matter what. Precisely this dutifulness made him an exemplary SS man. "My stony mask" convinced the superior "that there was no need to 'toughen me up'" (Kühne 2010, pp. 67–68).

65. Quoted in Dawidowicz (1976, p. 133).

66. Goldhagen (1996, pp. 259, 307) and Schelvis (2007, p. 113).

67. Quoted in O'Reilly (2008, p. 165).

68. Quoted in Arluke and Sax (1992, p. 20).

69. Kühne (2010, p. 127). Kühne (2010, p. 67) continues: "'Decent' torture and murder were required, not torture with relish. Obvious sadism was even prosecuted, although only rarely. […] Never, though, was murder to be justified as a consequence of 'hate, blindness, or ambition'—that is, of individual dispositions. Establishing a culture of brutality did not mean satisfying the needs of psychological pathologies but engineering a totalitarian community."

70. Höss (2001, p. 135).

71. Having said all this, Himmler was not always able to find a Höss-type figure for every gruesome yet "necessary" task. As a result, the SS-Reichsführer was always open to lowering his bar and hiring a sadistic psychopath and convicted pedophile like Oskar Dirlewanger.

72. Hayes (2017, p. 148).

73. Neitzel and Welzer (2012, p. 149).

74. Bauman (1989, p. 26).
75. After Elias (2000) [1939] wrote about civilizing processes across the early modern era in Western Europe, "In later work, Elias (1996) introduced the idea of a 'decivilizing process' with which he explained the Nazi period and its regression from civilization into barbarism. […] the concept of 'decivilization' emphasizes the contingent and reversible nature of the process…" However, as Ray also notes, "there would be … problems if it could be shown that the Holocaust presupposed not so much a decivilizing process but"—as Volume 2 of the present book would suggest—"the very attributes of civilized habitus—planning, forethought, technical sophistication and a state monopoly over the means of violence." (Ray 2011: 52–53). Thus, Ray adds, "The question for Elias, then, is whether civilization overcomes violent passions or whether they metamorphose into more calculated forms." (2011, p. 57). More research is required to tease out this potentially fruitful yet no doubt complicated dialectical link between Elias (long-term civilizational processes), Bauman (rationalization and modernity), and the Holocaust.
76. Padfield (1990, p. 333).
77. Weitz (2003, p. 110, as cited in Kühne 2010, p. 34). See also Aly (2006, pp. 156–164).
78. Hilberg (1961a, p. 606).
79. According to Breitman (1991, p. 153) in December 1941 Theo Lang, a Swiss doctor working in Germany, told a British Secret Service agent "that Himmler's staff had been considering 'for a long time' the sterilization of all adult Poles. Himmler's later expression of interest in the process was not for a solution to the Jewish question; Hitler had already refused to consider it for that purpose, according to Brack."
80. Hilberg (1961a, p. 604).
81. Quoted in Berenbaum (1997, pp. 347–348).
82. Hilberg (1961a, p. 604).
83. Quoted in Trial of War Criminals Before the Nuremberg Military Tribunal, 1949–1952 (p. 50, as cited in Glass 1997, p. 91).
84. Rees (2005, p. 178) and Hilberg (1961a, p. 607).
85. Quoted in Hilberg (1961a, p. 605).
86. Hilberg (1961a, p. 607).
87. Quoted in Aly and Heim (2002, p. 269).
88. According to Hilberg (1961b): "In consequence of an agreement between Himmler and Justice Minister Thierack, so-called asocials were transferred from prisons to concentration camps. On November 16, 1944, after the transfer of the 'asocials' had largely been completed, the judiciary met to discuss a weird subject: ugliness. The phrase on the agenda was 'gallery of outwardly asocial prisoners [*Museum äusserlich asozialer Gerfangener*]."

The summary of that conference states: "During various visits to the penitentiaries, prisoners have always been observed who – because of their bodily characteristics – hardly deserve the designation human [*Mensch*]; they look like miscarriages of hell [*Missgeburten der Hölle*]. Such prisoners should be photographed. It is planned that they too shall be eliminated [*auszuschalten*]. Crime and sentence are irrelevant. Only such photographs should be submitted which clearly show the deformity" (pp. 642–643). Alluding to the potential danger of such policies for the Nazis themselves, the Gauleiter of Danzig-West Prussia Albert Forster once said of Himmler: "If I looked like Himmler, I would not talk about race!" (Levine 1969, p. 350, as cited in Rutherford 2007, p. 67).

89. Hilberg (1961a, p. 699).

90. The application of the Nazi regime's "most perfect" method of killing without killing on "unworthy women" continues in other colonized lands. In the Canadian context, for example, one recent lawsuit alleges that the federal government of Saskatchewan coerced Indigenous women—as recently as 2017—into being sterilized; see, for example, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/18/canada-indigenous-women-coerced-sterlilization-class-action-lawsuit. Interestingly, this notion of who is deemed unworthy within the Canadian colonial context is, much like the Nazis did with the Jews and Romani Gypsies, premised on the racist association of Indigenous Canadians being inherently "criminal" and dysfunctional. For an example from Saskatchewan of a settler explicitly expressing such insults—and of the police in this province occasionally relying on distancing killing techniques when dealing with the local Indigenous population—see https://www.nfb.ca/film/two_worlds_colliding/. In my view, the Nazi approaches when dealing with unwanted peoples are far from something that can be filed away as that which occurred during some antiquated bygone era with no applicability to the modern world.

91. Arendt (1984, p. 190).

92. Quoted in Hughes (1962, p. 5, as cited in Berger 2002, p. 16).

93. Koonz (2003, p. 220).

94. Quoted in Neitzel and Welzer (2012, p. 125). Oskar Gröning felt the same way: He endorsed the extermination of the Jews and only disagreed with the acts of brutality he observed at Auschwitz (Hayes 2017, pp. 142–143). More specifically, Gröning "draws a line between individual excesses and mass murder committed by the society as a whole. He believes the excesses are barbaric, but the mass murder legitimate" (Geyer 2005). Another similar example was the brutal Karl Frenzel, who worked in the T4 program and at Sobibor. After the war he was asked of his opinion of Hitler, upon which he replied, "I'm still backing him, except for the *Juden-Aktionen*.

They should have thought of a different solution" (quoted in Schelvis 2007, p. 254). Many Germans, even decades after the war, continued to long for the Nazis because as one woman pointed out: "During the war we didn't go hungry. Back then everything worked. It was only after the war that things turned bad" (quoted in Aly 2006, p. 179).
95. Hayes (2017, p. 141). Römer actually says Germans were "always" capable such violence, but as I have shown, this is probably a (very) slight exaggeration.
96. Elias (1991, pp. 146–147).

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Conclusion—The Milgram-Holocaust Linkage and Beyond

This book set out by asking a question that has perplexed Holocaust historians for many years: How did an only moderately antisemitic society in Germany end up killing millions of European Jews? I suggested one way to shed new light on this question might be to explore Stanley Milgram's Obedience studies, concentrating particularly on their invention. I reasoned that Milgram's invention of his experiments and the Nazis' invention of the Holocaust share a key similarity: Both successfully transformed large numbers of "ordinary" and arguably indifferent people into willing inflictors of harm. Therefore, if it were possible to delineate Milgram's start-to-finish journey in transforming most of his participants into inflictors of harm *on a likeable person*, perhaps my findings might offer some insight into how *only moderately antisemitic* Germans so quickly became willing executioners. Volume 1 revealed that when inventing and then collecting his data, Milgram relied heavily on formally rational techniques of discovery and organization.

In terms of the invention of the Obedience experiments, after hearing many Nazi war criminals plead that during the Holocaust they only followed higher orders, Milgram wondered if ordinary people in a social psychology experiment would also follow orders to inflict harm on an innocent person. He set out with a preconceived goal: run a harm-inflicting experiment that would "maximize obedience…" Because Milgram did not have a procedure capable of generating such a result, he had to invent one. Then, relying on forces he suspected caused the Holocaust—Nazi-like pledges of loyalty, strict obedience to harmful

orders, and little steps toward a radical outcome—he envisioned a rather rudimentary basic experimental procedure where participants accepted a pledge to obey orders to engage in an escalating physical assault. Soon realizing this idea would unlikely achieve his goal to maximize obedience, Milgram started applying his intuitive feel and drew on his previous experiences as a social psychologist to envision what he thought might better move him toward preconceived goal achievement. Two key innovations emerged: Instead of a physical assault, Milgram sensed participants might more likely inflict "harm" if they were instructed to deploy fake shocks from an emotionally and physically distancing electrical device (effectively substituting human labor with a more predictable, controllable, calculable, and efficient source of non-human technology). Also, he envisioned a more efficacious institutional justification for inflicting the shocks: By hurting the learner, the participant would help establish whether or not punishment improved learning. Rather powerfully, this procedural change morally inverted the infliction of harm on an innocent person into a commendable social good.

Although this emerging procedure started to appear a little less like the Holocaust captured in the laboratory setting, to test its potential to achieve his desired end result, Milgram had his students run a series of pilot studies. Not only did the first pilots demonstrate the basic research idea held enormous potential—about 60% of participants inflicted every shock—Milgram also observed them engage in unanticipated behaviors that inspired new procedural innovations that he thought might move him even closer to converting his preconceived goal into a reality. Importantly, these improvements were beyond his intuitive feel and past experiences of what he imagined might generate a high completion rate. For example, in the first pilot series participants could see an outline of the learner through a translucent screen. For many participants, the image of a pained learner clearly caused discomfort—seeing a connection between cause and effect likely made them feel too personally responsible for their actions. To Milgram's surprise, however, some of the distressed participants resolved the weighty dilemma before them by turning away from the pained learner and then continued to inflict further shocks. Thus, instead of Milgram from the *top-down* adding his own manipulative innovations to the basic procedure, these participants from the *bottom-up* invented their own such techniques. Inadvertently, these self-initiated actions helped move Milgram toward preconceived goal achievement. They did so because when some participants turned

away from the pained learner, Milgram's observation of this behavior caused him to wonder if introducing a solid wall to subsequent pilots might cause the completion rate to increase beyond 60%. If Milgram was right, then introducing a wall into the standard procedure would bring him even closer to goal achievement. Milgram's suspicions proved correct: During the next pilots, a wall was introduced and in the final trial run termed the Truly Remote Pilot, "virtually all" participants inflicted every shock asked of them. This trial saw Milgram achieve his preconceived goal and signaled that he was finally ready to run his first official baseline—an experiment he was confident would obtain a surprisingly high completion rate.

Thus, with time the "rules and regulations" surrounding Milgram's gradually improving procedure became the most efficient and predictable "one best way" for the experimenter (an actor) to control participants into doing what he (Milgram) wanted: to (ostensibly) inflict harm on an innocent person. And it was *past history*—Milgram's intuitive feel, past experiences, and close observations of the pilot studies—that had, through a process of trial-and-error discovery, gradually led him to a procedure that could push and pull nearly all into doing what he wanted. If he wanted to achieve his preconceived goal during the first official baseline condition, all Milgram's helpers—research assistants, actors, *and* participants—just needed to follow his latest and most effective "rules and regulations."[1] This, I would argue, was the rationally driven and somewhat circuitous learning process that guided Milgram toward the invention of his "one best way" to preconceived goal achievement.

The key to the success of the Obedience research was that, as best illustrated by the Truly Remote Pilot, every specialist task across the study's organizational chain—from the National Science Foundation funders, the participant "processing" team, to the shock-inflicting participants—felt or appeared sufficiently banal and thus adequately devoid of personal responsibility for any harm inflicted. It was critical that every functionary involved came to suspect that, because of the division of labor inherent within any bureaucratic process, all could blame someone else for their morally dubious yet personally (financially, materially, and/or socially) beneficial contributions to a harmful process. All needed to suspect that they could contribute to the infliction of intense stress or, in the case of the participants, physical harm with probable impunity. None could feel and appear to be most responsible. Such conditions made it

much easier for Milgram (and the experimenter) to persuade, tempt, and (if needed) coerce all helpers into fulfilling their specialist role.

In summary, Milgram's biggest leaps toward goal achievement came after he substituted a Nazi-like pledge to obey with the socially more acceptable pursuit of "scientific" discovery and a direct physical assault with the non-human technology of the "shock" machine, introduced the non-human technology of a wall, and (inadvertently) constructed the non-human participant-processing technology of bureaucracy. These innovations, in particular, ensured that by the time Milgram ran his first official baseline condition, most ordinary people at the end of his participant-processing assembly line willingly inflicted "harm" on an innocent person. During the invention of the baseline experiment, it is therefore fair to conclude, firstly, that Milgram behaved less like a social scientist and more like a goal-orientated project manager trying to socially engineer a preconceived result. Secondly, Weberian formally rational techniques of discovery, organization, and non-human technologies played a central role in the invention and production of the Obedience study's surprising results.

In Volume 2 of this book, I illustrated how certain innovators within the Nazi regime relied on the same Milgram-like formally rational techniques of discovery and non-human organizational technologies to achieve their preconceived goals. This shared reliance on Weberian formal rationality, I argue, forms the most important Milgram-Holocaust linkage—it played *the* key role in transforming so many ordinary and only moderately antisemitic Germans into willing inflictors of harm.

Inspired by the extermination of Indigenous North Americans and Armenians, Hitler rationally drew on past experience and an intuitive feel to envision initially rudimentary strategies of eliminating German and later European Jews—a group whom despised. Throughout the 1930s, however, there was neither a strategy, nor the organizational infrastructure or technology—*no procedure*—to render the German state capable of exterminating such massive numbers of mostly women and children. Despite the Nazis' unrelenting and intensifying propaganda campaign, which morally inverted the removal of all Jews from the Reich into a social good, Hitler's personal preference remained unachievable. As a result, the Führer moved on to other apparently more realistic solutions to his most urgent problem—the Jews were to be shipped to Madagascar.

It could be argued that Hitler's desire, in conjunction with ordinary Germans' increasing capability to kill fairly large numbers of civilians

after September 1939, stimulated a rational search for a technically feasible method of extermination. And, as apparently more realistic solutions like deportation were rendered unrealistic, powerful, and ambitious, project managers like Himmler and Heydrich started to sense merit in the once unrealistic solution of extermination—particularly mass shooting. The invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 offered a unique opportunity to pilot test various shooting techniques that at least aimed to work toward the so-called Führer's wish. Despite some "promising" discoveries and "auspicious" results by innovators like Jäger and especially Jeckeln that interactively (from both top-down and bottom-up forces within the execution hierarchy) emerged with increasing time and observational experience, major limitations remained with firearms as a means of mass extermination. Not least of which was that ordinary German executioners were forced to witness an undeniable connection between their causal contributions and the lethal effects. That is, guns made those most directly involved feel and appear too responsible for their actions. Little or no responsibility ambiguity remained at the last link in the organizational chain (just as Milgram would later discover). The resulting responsibility clarity often stimulated intense feelings of guilt and, most commonly, repugnance. Thus, Himmler (like Milgram) concluded that another way had to be found.

As this realization settled in, innovators across the organizational machinery of destruction independently pursued other exploratory pilot studies, trialing the viability of potentially more compartmentalized yet efficient killing techniques that could be attached to the last link in Eichmann's people-moving organizational process. The most "successful" of these killing experiments involved different logistical and technical means of gassing civilians. Over time, and building on previous experience (particularly the T4 Euthanasia project), certain front line innovators made increasingly destructive discoveries—Lange's gas vans at Chełmno, Wirth during Operation Reinhard, and finally Höss and his men at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Indeed, when Höss's advanced, highly efficient, relatively impersonal and apparently more "humane," gassing and body-incineration technique was attached as the last link in Eichmann's people-moving chain, ambiguity over responsibility for the end result increased, rendering frontline German perpetrators largely unaffected by their contributions (especially considering Jewish prisoners disposed of the victims' bodies). Consequently, the violent capabilities of German executioners in

places like Auschwitz increased enormously. Unlike the shooting squads who sometimes balked over killing certain types of victims, Höss's men showed an uncanny ability to kill without complaint truly massive numbers of civilians: Gypsies, Reich Jews, the elderly, mentally ill, women, children, even babies.

Throughout, this journey of discovery achieved sustained increases across all four of Ritzer's components of a formally rational system. This pattern was particularly evident as less predictable human labor was substituted for more controlling, predictable, calculable, and efficient non-human technologies. I therefore argue that the Nazi regime gradually evolved an ever-improving formally rational genocidal infrastructure, which, lying behind the executioners' individual actions, greatly contributed to the destructive end result. With time, the Nazis discovered that (much like with the Truly Remote Pilot) the less the touching, seeing, and hearing associated with harm infliction, the greater the "banality of evil" at the last, *and thus every*, point along the genocidal chain. And the more "banal" the process felt and appeared to all those involved, the more ambiguous the issue of responsibility and, as a result, the easier it became for authority figures (even peers) to persuade, tempt, and coerce ordinary and *only* moderately antisemitic Germans into killing. At each link across the organizational chain, every functionary helper had to be able to blame someone or something else as more responsible for their harmful contributions to the process—thus, the theory of responsibility ambiguity.[2] It is here that I believe we find the answer to Bauer's "real question" of how so many only moderately antisemitic Germans were quickly converted into willing executioners. Moreover, it is here that we come to recognize what Milgram actually uncovered in his laboratory— not people "just following orders" but the deployment of an inherently problem-solving, malevolent organizational process that—from the top-down *and* bottom-up—socially engineered the leadership's preferred preconceived goal into a terrifying reality.

Theories proclaiming, as I just have, a strong Milgram-Holocaust linkage have, however, been vigorously critiqued in the more contemporary literature, largely because the Obedience studies have been shown to conflict in many ways with the Holocaust's finer historical details. Indeed, the current consensus in the Obedience studies literature is that Milgram's research provides few, if any, insights into how during the Holocaust the undoable became doable. Consequently, all attempts to advance linkages between the Obedience studies and the

Holocaust—including Milgram's own—have encountered stern criticism. Lutsky perhaps best summarizes these authors' criticisms when they dismiss all previous attempts to link the perpetration of the Holocaust with Milgram's experiments: "What an emphasis on obedience slights, however, are *voluntary individual and group contributions to Nazi ideology, policy, bureaucracy, technology, and ultimately, inhumanity*" [italics added].[3] As I've shown, however, the Obedience studies were not about obedience *per se*, which (despite Milgram's beliefs) constituted more of an excuse that helped participants displace elsewhere responsibility for their actions. Instead, as the last three chapters of Volume 1 illustrate, the "Obedience" studies actually revealed the impact of voluntary individual and group contributions to an (albeit scientific) ideology, goal-orientated organizational policy (maximizing the completion rate), coercive bureaucracy, and strain resolving technology. And in Milgram's laboratory, I argue that all these factors contributed enormously to the generation of inhumane behavior. So in conflict with the present consensus even among Milgram's strongest advocates that the Obedience studies have at best only minor explanatory power when applied to the Holocaust, I suggest this primary similarity (formal rationality) advances a strong Milgram-Holocaust linkage along new lines.

To be clear, I do not mean to suggest that Milgram accurately simulated the Holocaust in the laboratory setting. To ensure his baseline procedure was both workable and capable of achieving a high completion rate, Milgram frequently added his own (non-Holocaust-related) strain resolving and binding techniques (e.g., his substituting the "pledge to obey" with the infliction of harm in the name of science). Major differences like this, however, mean that my list of commonalities between the Obedience studies and the Holocaust itself could be invalidated by an equal and perhaps even longer list of differences in historical facts. Milgram himself faced such criticism. Despite advancing numerous and initially convincing linkages, his critics were quick to remind him that *unlike* his experiments, German perpetrators were exposed to an intense propaganda campaign, despised their victims, acted with enthusiasm, volunteered to harm their victims, engaged in excesses, and afterward rarely expressed remorse. In short, my critics could also argue that much like Milgram, I too have fallen prey to the Conformation Bias: The tendency to only present evidence that confirms my preconceived beliefs (my above Milgram-Holocaust linkages), followed by a failure to mention any conflicting facts.

There is, in fact, one historical difference between Milgram's participants and the Nazi executioners that, perhaps more than any other, conflicts sharply with my Milgram-Holocaust linkage. That is, most Germans who refused to, for example, shoot Jews did so because of sheer physical revulsion.[4] Nearly all of Milgram's participants, on the other hand, refused to harm their victim on *ethical* grounds: "I don't think it's right."[5] Thus, before Milgram's participants and Hitler's executioners decided whether or not to harm another person, *there was a moral dimension inherent in the former's dilemma that was absent from the latter's.*[6] Put simply, Milgram's participants and Hitler's ordinary Germans were faced with resolving a completely different type of dilemma, thus generating at the base of their respective decision-making process a foundational difference in kind and not degree. Because of this substantive difference, it could be argued that the Holocaust and the Obedience studies are incomparable events, therefore invalidating all attempts to advance any Milgram-Holocaust linkage. As logically compelling as this argument might sound, I disagree.

Instead, I suspect the Obedience studies and the Holocaust share a *certain* commonality that is so important that it is capable of negating the technical historical differences that separate them. That is, both Milgram and the most "successful" Nazi innovators applied formally rational techniques of discovery, bureaucratic organization, and other non-human technologies to overcome any obstacles that got in the way of goal achievement. For example, during Operation Barbarossa, Himmler's goal was for his men to shoot every Jewish person they encountered. Initially, however, many Germans struggled and even refused to shoot all Jews because they found it revolting. Consequently, certain Nazi innovators used rational techniques of discovery, organizational processes, and other non-human technologies in an attempt to scale this obstacle interfering with goal achievement. Milgram, on the other hand, had a conceptually similar although technically different goal: to ensure that most participants inflicted excruciating "shocks" on an innocent person, thus maximizing his baseline experiment's completion rate. However, during the pilot studies, many of Milgram's participants refused to shock the learner because they thought it was unethical to do so. As shown, Milgram used rational techniques of discovery, organizational processes, and other non-human technologies to scale this obstacle interfering with goal achievement. Therefore, it may not matter that different obstacles were encountered—or even different paths

pursued—during their quest to arrive at similar (although technically different) destinations. What is most important is that both Milgram and the most "successful" Nazi innovators used the same formally rational tools—techniques of discovery, organizational processes, and other non-human technologies—to find a way—*any way*—of arriving at goal achievement.[7] And with more time and greater experience, the most innovative among them found increasingly more efficient, predictable, calculable, and controlling solutions. Thus, again, the single most important Milgram-Holocaust linkage of all is Weberian formal rationality.

Because basically all people in contemporary society rely on formally rational problem-solving techniques for personal goal achievement, could it not be argued that the generalization of my above conclusion is rather useless because it could be shaped to explain just about any malevolent social outcome? While we all may rely on formal rationality, it is important to note that only the most powerful people in society are able to use it as a tool to achieve macrocosmic goals that can, on a grand scale, adversely affect the lives of many other beings. Only the powerful have the wherewithal to procure the services of an army of problem-solving specialist helpers, to build enormous bureaucratic organizations, and to source and then insert other efficacious non-human technologies. In fact, it could be argued that the powerful are so because, more than others, they have the resources to deploy the most effective formally rational tools with which to try to secure their large-scale personal goals. Milgram (as a fully funded professor at Yale University) and the Nazi leadership are examples of such powerful people. Well-resourced government and corporate leaders, along with particularly persuasive individuals, are other examples. Armed with preconceived goals, these societal leaders are more capable of securing the help and expertize of a second group, less powerful functionaries, who fill specialist organizational posts across an emerging division of labor. This second group has (with varying degrees) some power because they too have a choice, albeit a more modest one, to either agree or refuse to help the powerful achieve their preconceived goals. It is a modest choice because, as we have seen, the powerful often have top-down means of motivating—pushing and pulling—helpers into doing what they want. Examples of this second group include Milgram's research assistants, his actors and, had the experiment been real, the participants (all of whom had the choice to refuse or agree to perform their specialist roles in the wider organizational process). During the Holocaust, this second group included all of those Germans below

the Nazi leadership—those working within the perpetrator infrastructure, along with the consenting or indifferent German public. Other examples include functionary bureaucrats working in government or corporate posts. And the way the powerful use specialist helpers within a problem-solving bureaucratic organization can indirectly or directly cost a third group, the powerless, dearly, as happened both in the Obedience studies and in the Holocaust. The powerless are those whom the choices of the powerful leave, for the most part, without any choice at all. Examples include, again had the Obedience studies been real, the learner, the Jews, and other civilian victims of Nazi hegemony.

So, it could be argued that in the case of both the Holocaust and the Obedience studies the powerful used the expertize of functionary helpers, access to bureaucratic organization, and other non-human technologies to advance their own self-interests and did so at the expense of the powerless. Thus, if we assume that during the Obedience studies the learner was genuinely harmed, what Milgram captured in the laboratory setting was the application of goal-directed formal rationality by the powerful as a means of devising an unequal social structure from which, at enormous cost to the powerless, the powerful ultimately benefited. And because the powerless can do little to resist predation, the Obedience studies captured in the laboratory the use and abuse of formal rationality as a self-serving and unethical tool of power, oppression, and inequality. And when viewed through this lens, what the Obedience studies actually captured on a relatively small scale, as other scholars of Milgram's research have long suggested, can be generalized to the Holocaust, as well as to multiple other examples of organizational malevolence so common in modern society.

Consider the following examples wherein to achieve their own personal "Rational Goal/s" and extend their power, financial/business, political, and/or social leaders (the "Powerful") have applied the tool of formal rationality—bureaucracy—to achieve their personally beneficial goals, which, in some shape or form, directly or indirectly generated an "Externality" paid for by the "Powerless" (Table 9.1).

Much like in the Obedience studies, powerful people constructed/maintained the above organizations by offering functionary helpers some kind of personal benefit in exchange for their participation (typically in the form of financial reimbursement, non-financial benefits, prestige, or job security). Because it is in their interests to do so, most functionaries

Table 9.1 Some destructive organizational processes in modern society

Powerful	Rational goal/s	Externality	Powerless
Law and order politicians	Maintain capital punishment (pleasing "law and order" voters, and thus perpetuating the term these politicians serve in office)	Wrongful executions	Wrongfully convicted and executed prisoners
Dow Chemical Company	Profit maximization obtained through low labor costs and unsafe (inexpensive) working conditions	Bhopal gas disaster	People of Bhopal
USA and UK governments	Pursuing an illegal war—the Invasion of Iraq	Civilian causalities	People of Iraq
Canadian government	Profit maximization (by selling military weapons to violators of human rights laws like the Saudi Arabian government/monarchy)	Civilian casualties	Civilian dissidents of the Saudi Arabian government/monarchy
Joe Fresh/J.C. Penney	Profit maximization (by using inhumane sweatshop labor working in unsafe working conditions)	Collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory	Impoverished sweatshop laborers in Bangladesh
Ford Motor Company	Profit maximization (by knowingly selling a faulty and dangerous product)	Pinto cars occasionally exploding causing driver and passenger casualties	Lower socioeconomic car buyers in the USA
Tyson Foods	Profit maximization (by way of efficient industrialized factory farming processes)	Cruel processing systems	Cattle
Joseph Stalin and the Soviet government authorities	Forcefully collecting and then diverting the Ukrainian grain harvest to the rest of the Soviet Union/satellite states	Mass starvation	People of Ukraine

naturally accept the offer. When, as in all the above examples, a full contingent of specialists agree to fulfill their roles, their collective actions immediately or eventually end up directly or indirectly costing a particular powerless group dearly. The division of labor, along with other avoidance-enabling non-human technologies, allows the powerful and their specialist helpers to avoid directly experiencing (or be affected by) the

potentially disturbing perceptual consequences that their contributions end up having on the powerless.

Beyond the division of labor, an important non-human technology relied upon by many of the powerful and their functionary helpers in the above examples was geographical distance (the harm occurred far away in the sweatshop factory, on the mysterious kill floor, somewhere in the Middle East or Soviet hinterland). For powerful people and their specialist functionaries, however, this kind of structural compartmentalization detracts from their level of awareness. And this lack of awareness, coupled by the involvement of many functionary contributors, can, as mentioned, stimulate "responsibility ambiguity": general confusion over who is totally, mostly, partially, or not at all responsible for a harmful end result. The presence of responsibility ambiguity across a totally compartmentalized organizational chain (much like the Truly Remote Pilot) can, as mentioned in Volume 1, encourage the emergence of two types of functionaries. The first type of functionary can make their eventually harmful contributions to the wider process because they are genuinely unaware of and do not realize the consequences of their actions (e.g., the technician who built Milgram's shock machine, but presumably never saw what Milgram did with it). Compartmentalization and responsibility ambiguity throughout an organizational chain can, however, also encourage the emergence of a second type of functionary. Quite differently, this second type of functionary comes to sense opportunity amid the confusion: Despite secretly knowing (in concept) about the negative effects their contributions will have on the powerless, they nonetheless sense that they can continue contributing to, and personally benefiting from, the infliction of harm on the powerless safe in the knowledge that they can probably do so with impunity (e.g., Milgram who publicly claimed he believed his experiments were harmless, but just in case they weren't, he earlier also attempted to protect himself by ensuring all participants signed a legal waiver). This second type of functionary can probably act with impunity because should, in the unlikely case, they ever be held to account for making their contributions, they know that thanks to compartmentalization, they can (disingenuously) claim to have been the first type of functionary: They were (apparently) unaware of the harmful consequences of their actions. And if that doesn't work, they can simply blame someone else as more responsible than themselves or diffuse (dilute) personal responsibility across all the other contributors. This organizational loophole exists because the presence of other

contributors and various avoidance-promoting non-human technologies makes denying responsibility easy and localizing it difficult. Thus, bureaucratic organization provides a fertile environment for a metaphorical haze or fog to rather conveniently descend over the issue of awareness and responsibility. So, even when the powerful and their functionary helpers know (in concept) that their collective contributions to goal achievement will end up directly or indirectly costing some powerless group dearly, because they appear or feel sufficiently "covered," many are willing to prioritize their relatively trivial desires (salaries, enormous profits, employee benefits, promotions, medals, prestige, and other perks), over the more important needs of the powerless (avoiding death, illness, and misery).[8]

In fact, the wider organizational structures surrounding helpers actually discourage them from doing otherwise because the system is geared toward ensuring that engaging in wrongdoing is easy and convenient, and resisting unethical goal achievement is both difficult and personally burdensome (as whistle-blowers and resisters—a third type of bureaucrat—in some of the above examples know only too well). Thus, formal rationality, as Milgram inadvertently illustrated on a relatively microcosmic scale, can be a very effective tool for the powerful and their functionary helpers to pursue a personally beneficial yet iniquitous organizational goal. And within that organizational system, it is the inherent murkiness surrounding the issue of awareness and responsibility that enables all involved to abuse their greater power with probable impunity.

The "powerful" and their helpers in the above examples would likely dispute my associating their behavior with that of Milgram and his helpers during the Obedience studies, and especially with what I hope contributes to a better understanding of the Holocaust. Their intentions, they would no doubt argue, were to variously protect their electorates from murderous criminals, generate jobs in a poor Indian city, bring freedom to Iraqis living under tyranny, promote international trade with an ally, generate jobs in a poor Bangladeshi city, produce affordable cars for struggling Americans, supply affordable food to all Americans, and distribute grain fairly throughout a union. However, two points should be kept in mind. First, it is the powerful who control the initial framing of their rational goals—the powerful control the script and have an influential say in socially constructing their formally rational goal/s as a moral "good." Consequently, they have the power to present goal

achievement to their functionary helpers (and potential critics) in the form of a noble task (as Milgram did). And in a "yes-man" functionary environment, where all helpers are likely to personally benefit in some way, who is going to challenge the boss's account? Although the powerful may genuinely believe their goals to be noble, it is rare that they do not have vested interests in their own success. Milgram, for example, likely believed in all earnestness that his experiments would provide new insights into how the Nazis perpetrated the Holocaust. But at the same time, he also seems to have sensed that whether or not his experiments achieved this outcome, he would benefit financially and professionally from his conversion of innocent people into stuttering wrecks. And because Milgram was in a relatively stronger position of power, he also knew there was probably nothing his "subjects" could do about it—recalling the unemployed Fred Prozi's undisguised starring role in Milgram's documentary, despite Prozi's reservations about his face being shown, as he said, "nationwide or something…"[9] Milgram assured him the video recording would only be shown to psychologists. What Milgram failed to anticipate was that after publishing his first baseline experiment, someone with equal or even greater power might come after him. Indeed, a year after this publication, Berkeley University's Diana Baumrind attacked Milgram with her searing ethical critique and the then untenured Milgram thereafter failed, in another broken promise, to publish the results of his incomparably unethical Relationship condition. Ironically, Milgram's Asch Conformity experiment-like actions to "conceal" this "purely private" "secret" arguably revealed the order of his priorities: His academic career came before the dissemination of scientific knowledge—results that might reveal insights into the Holocaust. The powerful may espouse grand and what they believe to be moral intentions (much as Hitler did in his quest to bring Germany to greatness), but would an independent audience (with no vested interest in goal achievement) come to the same conclusion? And if the goal is indeed so grand and noble, would the powerful continue perceiving that goal as a moral good if they suddenly found themselves in the position of the powerless?

Although the comparison is far from perfect in every case, each of the examples in the above table involves formally rational decision-making as a means of bringing about a predetermined end, in which functionary helpers used techniques of discovery, bureaucratic organization, and other non-human technologies to find the one best way of overcoming

any obstacles impeding goal achievement. And thus, they all share key elements with the Obedience studies: a division of labor, responsibility ambiguity, displacement/diffusion of responsibility, bureaucratic momentum, moral disengagement, perceptual avoidance for all or most links in the organizational chain, self-interested benefits, and, because of the disparity in power inherent to their iniquitous systems, the option for all to contribute to goal achievement with probable impunity.

Making contributions to iniquitous systems rarely feels all that bad to those involved because engaging in wrongdoing becomes normative—everyone around them is doing it. And in such an environment, anybody with any power is unlikely to draw critical attention to the iniquity experienced by powerless groups, because they in some way are likely benefiting from that inequity. All therefore have a vested interest in maintaining a consensual silence. Should anyone feel a pinch of guilt, they can remind themselves of the boss's morally inverted noble cause. And should any outsider mention the things that all would prefer, for personal comfort, remain unsaid—whistle-blowers, activists, investigative journalists, regulatory watchdogs—all functionaries can self-invent their own whitewashing and guilt-neutralizing coping mechanisms: "I'm just following orders, what can I do?" "I'm just trying to make ends meet," and in a brutal world sometimes "shit happens" (but mysteriously rarely to me).

It is for these reasons that I believe formal rationality provides the most compelling way to generalize Milgram's laboratory findings to the outside world. Milgram himself sensed this connection, arguing that bureaucratic organization was perhaps "the most common characteristic of socially organized evil in modern society."[10] It is even tempting to go a little further and argue that what the Obedience experiments captured on a relatively small scale is the cold, calculated, and ignominious abuse of power that has become common practice in our increasingly unequal neoliberal societies wherein, with the time and necessary experience to find the "one best way" to goal achievement, the powerful can implement ever more efficient, predictable, calculable, controlling ways to advance their own interests, while the poor (and now increasingly middle class) must suffer the consequences. This is a point worth pondering when one considers the popularity of neoliberalism among social elites—free international trade, increasing privatization, strong property rights, deregulation, fiscal austerity, and the promise of so-called trickle-down wealth advancing the well-being of all peoples. All that seems

to have objectively increased, however, is income inequality.[11] No wonder after World War Two German war criminals fitted back so quickly and easily into contemporary society: This was exactly the kind of iniquitous political system the Nazi leadership took to unnatural extremes. It is almost tempting to argue the Nazis were quite simply ahead of their time. As Omer Bartov uncomfortably reminds us, "…Western representations of the Holocaust fail to recognize that this extreme instance of industrial killing was generated by a society, economic system, and civilization of which our contemporary society is a direct continuation."[12]

Formal rationality is so applicable to modern life that it extends to what are probably the two greatest threats to life on earth today: nuclear holocaust and climate catastrophe.[13] In terms of the first, just before the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, Raul Hilberg ominously alluded to the new world powers' formally rational pursuit of what is a far more efficient, predictable, calculable, and controlling method of genocide than Auschwitz's gassing system:

> The bureaucrat of tomorrow… is better equipped than the German Nazis were. Killing is not as difficult as it used to be. The modern administrative apparatus has facilities for rapid, concerted movements and for efficient massive killings. These devices not only trap a larger number of victims; they also require a greater degree of specialization, and with that division of labor the moral burden too is fragmented among the participants. The perpetrator can now kill his victims without touching them, without hearing them, without seeing them.[14]

It is certain that at the height of the Cuban missile crisis, neither the American nor the Soviet leadership would have had any difficulty in finding bureaucratic compliance with commands to push the buttons that would have killed tens, perhaps hundreds, of millions of civilians.[15]

The moral dilemma at the end of the Obedience studies' organizational chain may not sit perfectly with the Holocaust. But it may fit better with what is arguably the second other greatest threat to life on earth: climate catastrophe.[16] In our "golden age of low-cost energy,"[17] greenhouse gas emissions are the consequence of worldwide economic and population growth. But for some time now the scientific community has warned increasing carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and methane emissions, and the higher global temperatures they cause, will precipitate a worldwide environmental catastrophe. Independent audiences (those

without any vested interests) presented with this moral dilemma would very likely conclude that choosing to increase instead of significantly decreasing greenhouse gas emissions would be the morally wrong course of action. So is it possible that, given worldwide greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase despite much talk of "planned reductions," humankind has started to fall into an insidiously regressive and seemingly inescapable Milgram-like trap? Certainly, it seems that almost no one among the most powerful—Security Council politicians, Fortune 500 CEOs, rank-and-file (functionary) corporate/government employees, the middle and working classes, developed world consumers, investors, and voters—are prepared to address the issue seriously. Collectively, we refuse to sincerely confront an issue likely to bring about "civilization collapse" because of what are perceived to be far more pressing, immediate, interests—the promise of a higher standard of living, greater economic growth, more jobs, and the prioritization of convenience over sustainability. As Jarod Diamond convincingly argues, the risk of societal collapse increases when "there's a conflict of interest between the short-term interests of the decision-making elites and the long-term interests of the society as a whole, especially if the elites are able to insulate themselves from the consequences of their actions. Where what's good in the short term for the elite is bad for the society as a whole, there's a real risk of the elite doing things that will bring society down."[18] As we climb the metaphorical carbon parts per million (ppm) "shock board"—320 ppm in 1965; 330 ppm in 1975; 345 ppm in 1985; 360 ppm in 1995; 380 ppm in 2005; 400 ppm in 2015[19]—is it possible we have already entered the Obedience study's dreaded post-capitulation phase where no one breaks off? Do we refuse to reduce our carbon footprint because secretly we all know that across the oil economy's division of labor there is always someone else to blame for our personally beneficial yet eventually destructive contributions to the wider process? Those ultimately responsible for climate catastrophe can disappear because developed world consumers can blame weak government, government can blame intransigent voters, corporations can blame insatiable consumer demand, and developed world citizens can blame greedy corporations. And do we also continue to do nothing (except assiduously contribute to and benefit from climate catastrophe) because privately we all know that by the time life on earth starts getting really nasty—say by 2100 when southern Spain has turned into a desert—we'll all be dead.[20] That is, is the cause of our inaction that we all secretly know we are unlikely to become

victims—this is only going to be a real problem for our descendants—thus freeing us to act with impunity? Climate catastrophe—along with the national debt, oceans of plastic, polluted "fracked" groundwater—is what our children will inherit from us.

When I think about climate catastrophe, I cannot help sense a connection between developed world peoples and Germans who lived in, and benefited from, the Nazi regime. This is, for me, inadvertently best captured by Götz Aly. At the start of his fascinating book *Hitler's Beneficiaries: Plunder, racial war and the Nazi welfare state*, he points out that what he discovered:

> belies the optimistic conviction that we today would have behaved much better than the average person did back then. Readers of these pages will encounter not Nazi monsters but rather people who are not as different from us as we might like them to be. The culprits here are people striving for prosperity and material security for themselves and their children. They are people dreaming of owning a house with a garden, of buying a car of their own, or of taking a vacation. And they are people not tremendously interested in the potential costs of their short-term welfare to their neighbors or to future generations.[21]

Clearly, we, as links in this chain of destruction, are *all* responsible for our harmful contributions, and thus every one of us must shoulder the obligation to do our fair bit to substantively reduce our carbon footprints. This is true, but one important caveat remains. When it comes to climate catastrophe, it is the most powerful people—like the "carbon capital elite"[22]—and the organizational infrastructures they control that have the greatest chance of encouraging—instead of furtively blocking—progressive change. For example, although across the late 1970s to the mid-1980s Exxon scientists, managers, and executives developed a "sophisticated understanding of the potential effects of rising CO_2 concentrations,"[23] for some years after this awareness—particularly under the leadership of Lee Raymond and Rex Tillerson—one of the world's largest oil companies,

> …ExxonMobil has embarked on a deliberate campaign of confusion and disinformation producing a counter-science to manufacture public uncertainty by funding a diffuse network of ideologically driven advocacy organizations, as well as other issues management, public relations, lobbying, and legal tactics.[24]

Yet in light of this "broadly successful"[25] attempt to manipulate and control the social and informational field in favor of the oil industry's self-interested desires, Tillerson, who strongly supports extracting the Arctic's now (thanks to climate catastrophe) increasingly accessible vast oil reserves,[26] then has the nerve to blame climate catastrophe on international consumers and their demand for more oil: "It's back to that insatiable appetite that the world has for energy. Oil demand is going to continue to grow."[27] So Tillerson has actively attempted to manipulate public opinion to the point it aligns with his own self-interested desires, but then blames climate catastrophe on the choices of those people he has effectively manipulated. This is somewhat like Milgram who invented a manipulative experiment that he could only envision personally benefiting from, going on to accuse those who completed it of being "moral imbeciles…"[28] Again, we are all personally responsible for our harmful actions, but the leadership with the greatest ability to control the wider infrastructure has an even greater responsibility to promote progressive and ethical change. As this book's journey into both the Obedience studies and the Holocaust illustrates, the fish rots from the head down.

In conclusion, when I watch Milgram's 45-minute documentary film with my students, I do not see "obedience to authority," and I'd go so far as to call anyone who does a fool. Looking beyond his laboratory walls, I instead see climate catastrophe, nuclear war, and untold other examples of organizational malevolence so common in modern society. It is interesting to note that although Milgram was never confident about what he'd captured in his laboratory, he was certain that whatever it was, it did not bode well for the longevity of humankind. With a variety of disasters looming, it is not difficult to sense Milgram's concern over the strong propensity for powerful people and their functionary helpers to prioritize relatively trivial personal interests over the need to act in response to more urgent moral demands. His words of warning may prove to be prophetic:

> The behavior revealed in the experiments reported here is normal human behavior but revealed under conditions that show with particular clarity the danger to human survival inherent in our makeup… This is a fatal flaw nature has designed into us, and which in the long run gives our species only a modest chance of survival.[29]

NOTES

1. Russell (2017).
2. Similar to the theory of responsibility ambiguity, Kühl (2016, p. 141) presents his "*gray zone theory…*" He argues that "when it comes to the use of violence by police officers and soldiers, there is a 'gray zone' in which it is not clear whether an order is legal or not. […] When moving within this gray zone, the organization – and, ultimately, the organization's members – must carefully weigh up which acts of violence are *covered* by the state's laws and which are not" (p. 141). [italics added] I support much of this theory except, unlike the theory of responsibility ambiguity, it fails to recognize that the dilemma these Germans encountered need not revolve around the law—dilemmas can (much like during the Obedience studies) center around a non-legal moral issue. The focus of Kühl's theory on the content of the law thereby fails to place the issue of personal responsibility front and center when functionaries are weighing up how to act when within this gray zone. Interestingly, when presenting his theory Kühl alludes to the central importance of responsibility: "in democracies and dictatorships alike, police officers know from experience which of their actions they could legally justify if required and which they could not. Knowing that acts of violence in a legal gray zone can quickly be attributed to the person instead of their role, *they make sure that nothing will happen to them even if something happens*" (p. 141). [italics added] Put more directly, before engaging in acts of violence, police, and soldiers (much like Milgram's 'obedient' participants) first ensured they were, as Kühl says, sufficiently "covered…" If Germany won the war, the executioners were, of course, "covered" because as Hitler reminded them, nobody would dare question their methods—might makes right. And if Germany lost the war, the police officers, for example, could evade or diminish their personal responsibility by blaming their superiors. The key goal for any link who decides to contribute to a malevolent organizational goal is to try and *avoid personal responsibility*, and they are to do so *by any means possible*.
3. Lutsky (1995, p. 63).
4. Browning (1992, pp. 74–75). See also Beorn (2014, pp. 72, 82).
5. SMP, Box 153, Audiotape #2305.
6. Consider, for example, Martin Mundschütz, a member of Einsatzgruppe D, who requested in a letter to his superior officer that he be transferred out of the extermination campaign and back to Austria: "My nerves have failed. That they have failed is only a result of my nervous breakdown three weeks ago which makes me suffer day and night from obsessions that drive me almost mad. Although it seems as if I now manage to

handle these obsessions, I apparently still have lost completely the control over my nerves and am no longer able to manage my willpower. I can't suppress my tears." So Mundschütz had lost control of his willpower (that was obviously in favor of participating in the executions) and was apologizing to his superior for failing to have "performed as a man." Because of his nervous breakdown, Mundschütz was simply reassigned to other ancillary (non-shooting) duties. However, Mundschütz remained unsatisfied by this reassignment and requested a transfer out of Einsatzgruppe D completely. As he explained: "Now I am supposed to drive around shopping. I am asking you to save me from this charge, because I don't want to bother my comrades nor other people with the unhappy performance of a crying soldier. … If you, sir, have a heart and understanding for one of your subordinates, who wishes nothing more than to sacrifice himself for Germany but does not want to stage the drama of a supposed wimp, please do remove me from here" (quoted in Kühne 2010, p. 86). As Kühne notes, those Germans who pulled out of the shootings like Mundschütz "did not question the morality of the community, but instead interpreted their own psychological constitution as abnormal" (2010, p. 87)—he was a weakling.

7. Actually, in terms of the squeamishness versus ethics obstacles, both Nazi innovators and Milgram arrived at a very similar solution: At the last link in their respective organizational chains, both inserted a wall to separate cause from effect.

8. Holocaust historian Yaacov Lozowick (2002, p. 274) found the Nazi perpetrators' "rational explanations" for their behavior (clearly trivial motives like peer pressure and career advancement among others) "shallow and unpersuasive…" Surely, there had to be more to their destructive behavior than this! But as Milgram's psychological trap illustrated, for many participants, motivational forces as pathetic as a fear of having to engage in a confrontation with the experimenter can be genuine when a powerless victim's miseries have, for the most part, been diverted by certain non-human technologies (like a wall) so that they cannot affect a harm doer's emotional universe.

9. Quoted in Perry (2012, p. 367).

10. Milgram (1974, p. 11).

11. Harvey (2005).

12. Bartov (1996, p. 9).

13. Chomsky and Polk (2013).

14. Hilberg (1961, p. 760).

15. Hilberg (1961, p. 760).

16. Worthy (2013).

17. Simmons (1976, p. 5).

18. See https://www.ted.com/talks/jared_diamond_on_why_societies_col-lapse. Accessed 21 September 2017.
19. See ftp://aftp.cmdl.noaa.gov/products/trends/co2/co2_mm_mlo.txt. Accessed 22 September 2017.
20. See Guiot and Cramer (2016, pp. 467–468).
21. Aly (2006, p. 4).
22. Carroll (2017, p. 229).
23. Banerjee et al. (2015).
24. MacKay and Munro (2012, p. 1530).
25. MacKay and Munro (2012, p. 1529).
26. Brown (2017).
27. Brown (2017).
28. Quoted in Blass (2004, p. 100).
29. Milgram (1974, p. 188).

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